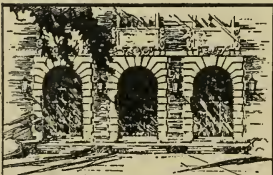


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# CASTLE AVON.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“EMILIA WYNDHAM,” “RAVENSCLIFFE,”

&c., &c.

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## CASTLE AVON.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE next day but one, and every successive day for a considerable time, did Claribert walk early in the morning to the little pool, and there, beneath the fringed alders, he pursued with undiminished ardour the education thus singularly begun.

The traveller, who gave his name as Charles, and who would give no other name, devoted four hours of every day to his instruction ; but so soon as the sun, his only clock, had reached a certain point in the heavens, he regularly

departed, and employed the rest of the day by himself.

His assiduity in teaching, during the time he was so employed, was unabated ; and either it was that he possessed the art of instruction to an extraordinary degree, or that he had a most extraordinary gifted pupil to instruct, but the progress made was astonishing, and would in particular have astonished any one who has attempted the task of endeavouring to initiate an adult labourer into the mysteries of letters.

The youth's perceptions were so clear and healthy, so apt and happy in receiving impressions, that the mere act of learning to read, was accomplished in a time wonderfully short ; and no sooner was he capable of mastering the treasures of wisdom, of fancy, poetry, and history collected in the pages of the Old Testament, than his intellects expanded with the same rapidity, that his moral being had done under the light of life from the New.

Many other books he had not, though a few, Charles from time to time supplied ; but there was abundance of food for his intellect, and for his heart in these two rich volumes. And the

culture thus afforded, was as remarkable for its clearness as for its simplicity ; for the vividness of the pictures presented to the imagination, as for the free healthy tone of thought, and the rectitude of judgment, and correct habits of reasoning thus formed.

The mind unimpeded by a confusion of unconnected, overcharged ideas, arising from ill-defined knowledge, apprehended the objects presented with remarkable clearness and vivacity, and all the powers of this fine nature were called forth to spontaneous, healthy exercise ; not clogged or confounded as many of our pupils are with the dull monotony of half-understood words—words which too often rather obscure, than give, a meaning. Each winged word was here as a bright intelligence to him, his teacher was but an ordinary, you might say, common-minded man. He, from these very precious books, drew forth but imperfect and often distorted images, for *his* mind had early been debased by a narrow and vicious culture. To Claribert they came, as we may suppose them coming to Adam and the early denizens of the yet free breathing, new created world ; illustrated by the

teachings alone of the great nature around them.

Beautiful was the mind thus matured and expanded, and its extraordinary beauty and loveliness shone forth in a most remarkable countenance. I despair in words to give you an idea of the cloudless openness, the freedom from embarrassment or vain fears, the singleness of heart, the limpid purity of thought and feeling there displayed. The fair transparent water, in the body of whose clearness a whole world of beautiful creatures lying beneath is displayed, may give a faint image of what I mean to express.

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Not so poor Charles. His face was wan and haggard, now lit up with passionate devotion and gratitude, now burning with a zeal that seemed to leave him no rest. Sometimes he seemed sinking into unutterable horrors at the idea of the dreadful doom prepared for the wicked; at others, in an

ecstasy of joy, he was singing forth psalms of deliverance !

The affection, gratitude and respect, which Claribert showed him, would on some days appear to afford him the highest gratification, and then he would pursue his instructions assiduously until the hour of parting came, and would go away in pursuit of his usual avocations tranquil and apparently happy ; upon others, a word dropped by accident—a sentence in the book they were reading, would seem to stab him to the soul, he would start up with wild cries, declaring himself the most dreadful criminal that ever polluted God's earth, for whom there could be neither hope nor salvation, then casting himself with his face to the ground, would lie there groaning for hours.

Still the confession he at first seemed intending to make, was never made. He appeared to shudder at the idea, and long was the moment delayed. But one day they had been reading the Scriptures together for some time, he illustrating and explaining it with very able comments ; for though entirely self-instructed, he had managed to gather together a vast

amount of curious learning. When they came upon the text, "Confess your sins to each other." This text, simple as it seemed, immediately produced one of his wild explosions.

He started up, clapped his hand upon his forehead, remained some considerable time in that attitude, then, with a heavy groan, saying :

"Yes ; I must, I must. Give Thy servant grace to do Thy will," he reseated himself by the young man, and said : " Will you hear my history ?"

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Without waiting for an answer, as one who relates a story rather to satisfy some inner need, than to gratify the curiosity of his auditor, he thus began :

"I was born—it matters little where such a being as I was born, except that the places where one passed one's earliest childhood, I suppose exercise a sort of fatality over one's future life. I was born, then, in a close, narrow, obscure street of the borough of Southwark, and my father was by trade a pawnbroker.



I suppose you know what the business of a pawnbroker is, young man, little as you are acquainted with the life of cities. If you do not, you must be told, that it is a profession calculated to be of the greatest service to mankind; but, as it is too often carried on, proving their greatest bane. The power a poor wretch thus obtains in some hour of great necessity, to obtain from a certain portion of his little property, the supply of his pressing wants, is a great advantage, and tends to make these poor things anxious to accumulate little comforts about them which represent money, and for which they can always obtain money.

“But then a pawnbroker should be a compassionate, a righteous man, not ready to grind the face of the poor, and take advantage of their necessities. He should, moreover, be a conscientious man, and not lend money upon a pledge, which he knows is about to be expended in the gin-shop, or abused to some wicked purpose or other.

“Things which my poor father was not.

“He was a hard-featured, hard-tempered man,

whose sole aim seemed to be to get money. Yet somehow he never succeeded.

“He was always grinding and grudging, and exacting to the uttermost farthing, if the redemption of a pledge was overgone but a day ; and many is the poor creature I have seen, begging and praying that he would remit the forfeiture and take the money ; but he never would, though it might be the bed she lay on. They used to call my father an old Jew. Jew or not I cannot say, but certain it is, not one syllable of Christian prayer, was ever heard in that house from year’s end to year’s end.

“We were four of us : my father and mother, a brother and myself. My poor mother I do not remember much about : she fell down stairs when I was very young, and was killed. I just remember the time, and what a dreadful sort of horror it threw upon those dark, narrow, winding stairs, which I had never crept up without fear of falling, and which were now more terrible than ever.

“Strange things too were whispered about,

and I heard the mutterings of people—they should take better care what they say before children. Some said the poor thing put an end to herself; others, that my father pushed her down in a fit of passion. How it was I do not know. All I remember of the poor creature is, a rather pretty, slender, gentle-looking woman, dressed in the dirtiest and shabbiest manner, with an old cap with a flower, or some bit of finery or other in it, falling half off her head.

“She moved about as if she was not quite herself; and whenever father’s back was turned, too truly, she was sure to send one or other of us to the gin-shop, for a penny glass. She would often give brother a sip for fetching it; but I hated the liquid fire, and would not taste it.

“When she was more drunk, perhaps, than usual, and father after having been out some time, as he often was towards night, came back and found her in this condition, he would be in a dreadful rage. Terrible was it for us to see and hear. And whether he ended her misery at last by pushing her

down stairs, I don't know; but after that, it is certain he looked more hard and terrible than he had ever done before; so that we two little boys trembled if he but cast an eye upon us."

The man stopped here, to take breath as it were. The recollection of his childhood seemed too fearful to be endured. His haggard face assumed a more wan and pallid hue, and his eye looked wilder as he recalled it.

"We had an uncle, a strange sort of man, who used sometimes to come home with my father at nights. I never saw him by day. There are some men, like some animals, who seem formed to be denizens of night, and their aspect is sinister and unpleasant. Bats and owls and so on are of these—they don't look like the creatures of God. People put them in pictures with hags and witches, as if only fitted to consort with such.

"My uncle was one of these sort of looking beings. He seemed not fitted to mix with daylight-men. He had little dark blue eyes, looking about like a rat's, as if he were always

upon the watch, and doing things by stealth. Then he had a certain hard horror written upon his face, as if he was always about some deed of darkness, which he would not suffer to horrify him.

“Enough ! enough ! of the hideous shapes that thronged about my unredeemed infancy. No baptized child was I. I was a poor, miserable little wretch, knowing neither Father in Heaven nor father upon earth—for he, called my father, was none to me—getting along as I could : sometimes in holes and corners, sick and wretched ; sometimes well, and in thoughtless spirits, playing about with other little vagabonds in the streets ; and so that the sun shone, in my way, happy.

“This went on, I don’t know how long. At last, one evening, my uncle came in sooner than usual ; it was just after dark ; and he sat down in the kitchen behind our shop, and rubbed his knees before the fire a little ; and then he called me to him, and looked at my face, and stroked down my hair, saying as he did so : ‘ You’re a smart-looking fellow enough

when you are cleaned up a bit. Should you like to go and be boy to a 'potecary?'

" 'Yes !' I said ; for I hated my home and everything belonging to it. What was there for any one to love ? The blessing of God was not upon that place ; the light of God's word had never beamed there, nor His peace been upon it. It was a den of misery and wickedness, extortion and cruelty. There be thousands such in most great cities. How long, O Lord ! how long ?

" And to think," he burst forth with energy, " that we live in a Christian land ! and that heathens, and worse, far worse, than the most ignorant of heathens, are living close by our doors, and children are day after day gathering bodily growth we know not how ; but never hearing one word, good or bad, to teach them right or wrong, or whence they come or whither they are going !" And he groaned aloud. " Such I was, such I was, for nine long years !

" Yet not altogether does the Lord leave Himself without a witness : even in this distress there is a faint shining, like a lighted ember in

a sea-coal fire, keeping up a glimmering of that which might be blown into a bright blaze. In my darkest hour there was a feeling of right and wrong. I knew I ought not to do wrong.

“But quite untutored, I was accustomed to yield to every childish temptation. I was a pilferer and a liar; I was everything that is bad, except cruel. I was not cruel. No, no! not naturally cruel!

“I don’t mean to tell you all that passed during the next seven years that I lived with the apothecary. Part of them were usefully employed, or should have been so. My master’s mother, who was a very good old lady, seeing how ignorant I was of the very name of my Saviour, took upon herself to teach me my Bible, and after a little while she sent me to the Sunday-school.

“I did not learn very much from my good old mistress, but she taught me to read and spell, and that is a grand thing where there is a Gospel to be read. No man can miss his way much who can read, and will read his Gospel.



But not much of Gospel truth did I learn at this time; for the good old lady, though the most excellent and pious Christian that could be, was irritable and cross, particularly with a heedless, stupid, senseless lad like me.

“She was a good, regular scold of the old school with children, and thought nothing was to be got out of them without harsh words and cuffs. Moreover, she was of a sour, austere countenance, very yellow and very wrinkled, and her snow-white cap, her stiff white kerchief, and her still stiffer black silk gown, which stood around her like a board, gave a something very unprepossessing to her appearance.”

He paused, moved, then burst forth again:

“I was a child that was formed for other things. How I came by it I know not, but I had the most passionate love for everything that was fair, and sweet, and beautiful. The blue heaven, the sunshine, the trees and the flowers—when, sometimes, I was in the way of seeing them—soft and kind faces, gentle and sweet words, possessed a power over me that drove me almost beside myself with delight.



Some methods might have done anything with me ; but in proportion as I loved the beautiful and the bright, so did I abhor the ugly, the dark, and the harsh. My soul loathed these things.

“ Well, where was I ? In spite of her angry ways, I rather loved my old mistress ; there was something venerable about her, and I knew her to be a thoroughly good woman ; and in the venerable, and the good there is always a something of the beautiful, and it was the beautiful that I doated upon.

“ As for the Sunday-school, I hated it. Sunday ! the bright day, the day of fresh air, enjoyment, and liberty ! after having been shut up in a little nasty-smelling shop all the week. How I had enjoyed it, when first I went as boy to the apothecary !

“ He used to send me to church in my turn, morning or evening. To church I never went ; I spent the time getting as far as I possibly could from my dwelling, in any direction, I cared not which ; sometimes to Westminster Bridge, to watch the flowing river and the boats and ships, and gaze upon the lordly buildings,

and the gardens, and green grass-plots of Whitehall ; sometimes right out into the country. Sometimes I could, with great diligence, get even as far as the parks.

“ I don’t know that these walks did me any particular good. I cannot recollect that my thoughts were ever much employed upon any subject ; gazing and enjoying the fresh air—that was enough for me. Yet they seemed, too, to have a sort of purifying effect. I used to feel, as it were, a lighter, and a better boy, when I came in. I never troubled myself about it being wrong to deceive my master, and not go to church. I had not grace enough in me at that time even to think about it. All I cared for was being undiscovered.

“ But what a change when I was sent to the Sunday school ! Oh, how I abhorred that Sunday school ! To leave the close, stinking shop, and instead of the sweet, fresh air, to exchange for the close, and still more stinking school-room ! The school-house was up a little dirty, back-alley behind the church, where not a single sunbeam ever penetrated except in the

very middle of summer. Thither we went at eight o'clock in the morning, and staid there till church-time. After church, home for one half-hour to dinner, and then to school again till church-time. After that, school again. Oh, the sweet sabbath rest ! Poor little wretches ! it was not for us. Then we used to stand in rows, hammering out one thing after another ; sick and wearied to death, and so longing for a bit of play. Then the dreadful long service, which seemed as if it would never come to an end—and the sermon, which was to me a mere string of words, utterly devoid of meaning ; I could sometimes have gnawed my hands with impatience, I longed so to be free.

“ But stop, stop ; where am I running to ?

“ These Sunday-schools are meant for the best—might do good, I dare say *do*—much good ; but many of them are not well regulated. Sufficient thought is not given to the happiness of the children, upon this their day of rest and recreation. I am speaking of those, like me—*working* children. Certainly the school I went to, did little or no good for me. If the time taken up

had been only half as long, it might have done much. Vague, undefined ideas of Gospel truth, I got. I learned that there was a God above us, and a Redeemer ; but as to any practical effect—as to any realising of these things—there was not the slightest produced upon me. I lived on, just as great a heathen as I had ever been ; nothing reached my heart.

“ Ah ! ‘ His paths are in the deep waters, and His ways past finding out ! ’ It has pleased Him to lead me through the depths—the darkest depths — but not for ever ! The poor strayed sheep should not be lost for ever !

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“ Young man, it is of His mercies I would speak to you, and I am coming now to the fearful part of my history, ‘ The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,’ and my heart of flesh shrinks from the task.

“ It is so dreadful to remember it all !

“ I was a thinking, calculating child. My

mind was strenuous in pursuit of an object—it wanted but to be rightly-directed. I hated my present mode of existence, now my Sundays were taken away, and I cast about and thought how to help myself—and throw off this insupportable yoke, which the power of others had laid upon me.

“I began to consider, how power was to be acquired in this world. The power from above—that power which is about our ways and around our bed, and spieth out all our paths—I never thought of applying to. There was only one power that presented itself to my mind, as the power before which everything must yield, and that was—the power of money.

“I resolved to get money. I grew hungry, insatiable for money. How I came by it I cared not, so that I might but get it. It appeared to me the true help to unlock my prison-bars, to open to me all the enjoyments of the world. Covetousness took possession of my soul. I had chosen my god—a bare idol before whom I fell down and worshipped! ‘Ye

cannot serve God and Mammon.' I chose Mammon.

"That is how it is with most—perhaps with all. So it will be with you, young man, sooner or later. You will have to choose between God and Mammon. Oh! trample upon the desire of riches! — abhor covetousness! — despise riches! Seek God. Stand fast by God—in good report, in evil report—in sorrow and in joy—when He afflicts, or when He sustains! Stand fast by God!

"When this passion had taken possession of my soul, the little light that was within me seemed to go out; and for many years I lived quite abandoned to myself. They were years of darkness—utter darkness! Any way of getting money was alike to me. Sometimes I pilfered a little from the medicines, such as opium, the warmer cordials, and bitters, which I retailed to poor, nervous women, as drams. Sometimes, it was my time I stole, staying out in my rounds, to visit certain private patients of my own.

"At last, when I was about seventeen, I be-

came initiated into my uncle's horrid trade, which was that of a body-snatcher; and after a patient had been conveyed to the grave, would not only point out the place, but assist in carrying away the body. These midnight occupations completed the work, which other evil habits might still have left undone, and brutalized the little that was left of tolerably good within me.

“It is not so much the wrong that is done, by thus violating the holy sanctuary of the dead, as the attendant circumstances which render this occupation so destructive to the soul. The time of night—the means used—the desecration of all, men naturally regard as sacred \* \* I know not what of disgusting, degrading \* \* Oh! it is dreadful! dreadful to think of the effect it produced upon me.

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“Horrid things these, young man; you wild denizens of nature have much to learn of the life of great cities—have you not? But



patience ; you shall hear still more, you shall hear what all this brought me to at last.

“ At this time, you must understand, that in one way or other I had picked up a smattering of physic, and could guess and blunder almost as well as my master.

“ I am a wretched skeleton now, a brand snatched from the burning, bearing all the marks of the fire upon it, blackened, and almost without form ; so fiercely hath the flame dealt with me ! At that time, in spite of my evil habits, and inclinations, I was rather a fair, good-looking youth ; and the poor people, especially the women, were glad when it was my turn to visit them professionally.

“ I had an eye to supplanting my master in his practice, and to setting up at no very distant time for myself ; I only waited till I could save money enough. In the meantime I was not a mere hoarder, I knew how to lay out my money when I could do it to advantage.

“ So I dressed tolerably well ; moreover, I was very profuse of my flattering words to the poor women, and of my smiles and caresses to the children, and, poor good souls, they would be



so pleased with my agreeable ways—for my master was sharp, short, and rough. And they were so especially delighted when I came to see their children.

“It was not all pure self-interest either. I used to get, in a certain way, fond of many of these little things. Poor wretches, as they mostly were, yet some of them would be like angels, so innocent, and so beautiful !

“Yes, yes, yes, believe me or not, who will—they, some of them, shone forth like angels, even in the midst of all that filth, degradation, and wretchedness—they did.”

He paused to take breath ; his face turned more livid ; his eyes had a more dark, and gloomy fire.

“It’s coming now, it’s coming,” and lowering his voice almost to a whisper, he went on.

“One night, I had just come in, when I found my uncle seated by the vast kitchen fire waiting for me.

“‘I came to have a talk with you, Charles ; shut the door, and sit down here by me.’

“There was something between importance and solemnity in his way of speaking, mixed with

a hidden look of joy and exultation—he went on, speaking in a low voice :

“ ‘There’s a famous job offered to me, and if you’ll help me to do it, you and I’ll go halves ; and what do you think the reward is to be ? Just a neat two hundred pounds, my lad. So one hundred shall be yours, if you’ll just find the needful.’

“ One hundred pounds !

“ I remember it now, how my heart stood still, then gave a sudden bound.

“ One hundred pounds all at once !

“ If the evil one had asked me to sell my soul for one hundred pounds down, do you think I should not have jumped at the bargain ?

“ ‘What am I to do for it ? Anything you will ; only name it,’ said I, sitting down by him.

“ ‘That’s my lad ! Listen to me. You go a deal among women and children practising, doesn’t you ?’ he said. ‘Well, reckon up the little ones under four year old, you may chance to have upon your sick list, and see if there chance to be a little golden haired, plump boy, whose locks some foolish mother has not been a

cutting. And if he be dead of his sickness by to-morrow afternoon, why there's a hundred pounds for you, and another, or as much more as I please to ask, for me.'

"I understood him well enough; but he had never before, throughout the whole of our transactions, proposed anything so wicked as murder. Many of his horrid calling have, and do, I believe, perpetrate such things; but my uncle had never hinted at such a crime upon any occasion, and I do not believe he intended it even now.

" 'Think over 'em all,' he said, seeing I did not speak, 'because as how I'd liefer you had the hundred pounds than any one else—so if you chance to have the right stuff about, pray do. If you can't, I must go elsewhere; for somewhere in this big town, I must find what's wanted, and that is, a fair child of under four years of age, with long yellow hair—and that afore to-morrow night; which is all the time I've got to make the search.'

"I was still silent.

"Young man, the adversary was busy with me; and, as there I sat thinking, up rose the

image of the very child—just exactly what he described, at this very time lying sick not many streets off, in a little close court, out of everybody's way, and one of ten children belonging to a bricklayer's labourer, who had been dead some two months back.

“The child was ill, and in his bed.

“‘Well,’ said my uncle, ‘you’re in a brown study, quite; but I have no time to lose—what say you? Do you know such an one, or do you not know such an one?’

“‘I think I do,’ I said.

“‘Ready dust,’ said my uncle, ‘how lucky!’

“‘Not altogether *that*.’

“‘Then what’s the use of telling on him to me,’ said my uncle, with a queer look.

“‘Because the child is—like to die,’ I stammered out.

“‘Is he? But how do you know that? and how do you know when? Come, come, I’ve no time to lose.’

“‘The child was very ill when I came away, and I don’t believe but what he’ll die to-night.’

“‘Or to-morrow morning, at least,’ said my uncle; ‘well, well, I’ll give you a chance—one

day, more or less, doesn't make much odds—they must be fain to wait till Monday morning. Can't expect one to find a child like that at the first moment.'

"I had left the child ill, very ill indeed, and had thought it possible he might never get over it. So far, what I said, was true. And it was because it was so far true, that this fearful temptation came upon me. I don't think that I was so bad, that I could for a moment have coolly desired the death, or aided, however remotely, in the death of a little innocent.

"It was the persuasion that the child might probably die that decided me. Such are the snares of the enemy, young man.

"So the subtle fiend tampers with us and plays with us.

"Oh! let me recal that accursed night. Yes, let me steep my lost soul in bitterness—in the gall of remorse and horror! So shall I better celebrate His mercies, who came down to save the sinner ready to perish, and to wash his crimson blood-stained soul white as snow!

"The child!

"Boy, it was a sweet little innocent, loving

angel of a child, such as one sees now and then, coming wandering into this wicked world as if they had lost their way. It was a loving little thing, and its mother's darling.

“She was a hard-working, suffering woman, with her ten children, and her husband, dead; but she had laboured night and day—never lost heart nor hope, because she had trusted God! She had trusted her God! In that narrow stifled court she lived to Him, and she loved Him, and His peace and His strength were there.

“There was another mother, as I afterwards learned—another poor widowed heart, who had also another boy; but no matter, let me go on.

“I love to dwell upon that little angel's face. The child loved me, and as much, as such a grovelling beast as I was become, could love anything, I loved him. I had really taken a great deal of pains with the case, which was one of an accident, and I hoped to save the child, though sometimes, as I said, I was afraid I should not be able.

“But the demon of gain was upon me. I, who had been poor so long, whose whole spirit

was intent only upon getting rich—becoming independant !

“ How lucky if the child would die !

“ My uncle went away, promising to come again in the morning, and hear what I could do ; repeating again that he would wait till the next night, Sunday, but longer than that, he could not, and that he would spend the next day hunting about for some other child, in case mine should fail him. So you see my uncle did not tempt me to this wickedness ; it was the devil within that did it.

“ I spent such a night—the worst I had ever spent till then. But it was but the preface to a long history, a faint preparation for nights upon nights that were to come—oh ! of such inexpressible horror !”

## CHAPTER II.

THE man went on with his history. Now he writhed—now he bit his clenched fist in a paroxysm of agony—now he buried his hands in his hair, and groaned aloud, and even tears in two streams ran down his hollow cheeks.

“Boy,” he said, “whilst you live remember me, and this—the difference between the hour before, and the hour after a great crime. There is a regeneration to good—there is a malediction to evil—anathema maranatha—there is a moment of new birth when the soul bursts the fetters of the flesh, and sees and owns her God



—there is a moment when hell gapes, and all the horrors of the pit are opened.

“I was a bad man that night, but I was not a great criminal. I had the heart to commit, but I had not yet committed, a great crime. The difference is vast. Oh ! it is among the inexhaustible mercies of our King and Master, that not every one actually commits the crime he is ready to commit. That we are spared, spared from the hideous consequences of our own wicked thoughts. That we are withheld from doing ! Oh, that such mercy had been shown to me ! Yet wretch that thou art to murmur ! Have not the richest mercies been thine ? Pardoned sinner ! Bless the Lord, oh, my soul ! and all that is within me, bless His holy name !

“Oh, that Saturday night, which I spent walking up and down my room, not able to lay down in my bed ; wondering how the child was, recalling the circumstances of the accident, the appearance of the wound, calculating the chances of mortification !

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“I was dressing myself the next morning in an absent manner, my mind in confusion, from the fever of the last night. The phantom of future success, wealth, and independence, all to be purchased by this one hundred pounds—which I already considered as my own—almost bewildered me. I had not made up my mind, mark you, that the child was certainly to die; but I *had* made up my mind, that some way or other, I would have the hundred pounds.

“I was indulging in wicked wishes, plans, and fancies, when they came to the door, and told me there was the mother of one of the parish patients below, who wished to speak to me, for her child was very bad, and like to die. My heart first beat violently—then stood as if it were still—then beat on again. My guilty wishes made me feel as if that consummation, which I certainly had not brought about, was guilt to me.

“I remember how I hurried about, forgetting this thing and that, and my hand shaking so with impatience, I could hardly put on my clothes. However, at last I got

down into the surgery, and there, sure enough, stood the very child's mother, with her apron to her eyes, crying. She had nine other children, yet she could not bear to spare one—the good soul.

“She told me how the fever and agony had increased dreadfully during the night—well they might, in the chamber in which those poor wretches were huddled together to sleep!—and that the little thing lay shrieking with pain. And she begged of me, so humbly and pathetically, to never mind my breakfast, but come directly and see what could be done! I knew what was wanted, and mechanically put a bottle of stuff into my pocket.

“So far, you see, I had not actually sinned. Habit was strong in me, to endeavour to give immediate relief. When people were in danger or suffering, it seemed a matter of course to try and help them. There was neither wrong nor right, goodness or badness in the act. It was a matter of course, as I said.

“So I *had* the bottle of stuff in my pocket all the time.

“There have been moments, young man,”

he added, lowering his tone, and his face becoming almost black with emotion, "when that little bottle, has hung round my soul like a weight of thousands and thousands of tons, dragging it down to despair—to that despair of God's mercy, which is perdition.

"I remember all that walk along those intricate, narrow, dark, filthy streets; the poor woman half-running, and sobbing and crying as she hurried along, and I making the best of my way after her. When we opened the door of the house, the shrieks and cries of the child were piercing.

"We stumbled up the broken old stairs, and got into the hovel rather than the room, where the poor little fellow lay upon his bed screaming with pain. By the symptoms, it was plain to me, upon examination, that mortification was setting in, and that without speedy relief, the child must be lost.

"That relief I had in my pocket.

"No one can tell till the Day comes, when all secrets will be revealed, whether the stuff I had in my pocket, would have saved the child's life or not, *that* rests with Him who

gave life; but this I do know, that I said to myself: 'Nothing can do any good; no use tormenting the poor thing.' Then when the child cried and shrieked, and the mother called passionately upon me to do something, I recollected some opium that I had in my waistcoat pocket, and I gave the child a little of that."

Claribert recoiled with involuntary horror.

"No, no; not active murder, only passive murder. I gave the opium to quiet the child's agony; no necessity to dose it. I knew well enough that the mortification, unless it could be arrested, would settle *that* matter; I had only to do nothing.

"I thought at that moment of temptation—it is thus the devil cheats us—I thought that to do nothing, was quite a different thing from doing *something*. I have met with people who would not administer a medicine to *prolong* life, when they would have died rather than have given one to shorten it.

"I didn't feel the full force of what I was about, till it was all over.

“ I left the room as soon as I saw the child asleep under the effect of the opium, and went about my usual business, carrying the bottle away in my pocket.

“ Would you like to see it? Here it is!” he cried, with an almost insane gesture, and gnashing his teeth, “ here it is !”

And he drew from his bosom a little corked phial bearing every appearance of age.

“ It is fifteen years ago; but here it is!” and grasping it with a wild, almost savage gesture, he returned it to his bosom.

“ They came and fetched me about eight o’clock that night. I would fain not have gone, but my master said they had been making a fuss at a vestry meeting that very morning, on account of his negligence, and that go I must; and so, as I was slowly and unwillingly leaving the house, I met my uncle coming up to the door.

“ ‘ Well,’ he said, ‘ are you ready ?’

“ ‘ Shall be to-morrow night, midnight,’ I said; and went on.

“ The child was sinking fast—perhaps a cordial medicine, and the proper application to the

wound, might have saved its little life still. I cannot pronounce—all I know is, that I thought it would at the time.

“I was afraid they might send for my master if I went away—which I wanted terribly to do, for to sit by that little crib was horrible—but I kept my place; I thought of my hundred pounds, and I kept my place.

“The little thing! I see him now! I see him now! Wailing and groaning, yet so good; and speaking to me in such loving tones, as if I was his friend. It was too late then, or I think I must have saved him. Well, well, well! He died! he died! Do you see him?”

“See what?” cried Claribert, startled and looking round.

“He, the little thing—there, there, *I* do.”

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“So I had my hundred pounds; and I bought a shop I had set my heart upon, and began business, and throve and made money; but the more money I made, and the more I throve, the wretcheder man was I.

“If I had been a miserable, houseless beggar, begging my bread, crime and I would have seemed of kin; but here was I, thriving and respected, with a green coat and a pink waist-coat, admired by all the neighbours, and toadied and petted by half a dozen rich old ladies. And that child’s face for ever before my eyes.

“I heard too, afterwards, what the poor little thing was wanted for—to impose the body upon a poor, wretched mother whose child was missing; and to whom they wanted to prove it was dead.

“The missing child, one wintry night, had been called suddenly home from where it was staying at his grandmother’s, because its father lay a dying. The steward had been sent to fetch the child, and because the night was tremendous, and no carriage could at that time cross the country in such weather, he was to wrap the little boy well up, and bring him on horse-back. He set off, taking the child, seated upon a cushion before him. They had to pass the ford of a river—Dana was the name of the place.



The night was very dark and bad. Neither the steward nor the child ever came home ; the horse—”

“ A black horse ?” said Claribert, who had listened to the last part of this recital with extreme interest.

“ I don’t know, for that ; but the horse came home alone. Some said the man and the little child were both drowned ; some said the man was murdered and the child carried away. From that hour to this, I believe nothing has been heard of them. That body did its work. They buried the poor little creature in great state—for the lost child was some great man’s heir—and so the man who was his heir-at-law, got the property ; and He above alone knows the wicked injustice that was done.”

“ A dark night ! on horseback ! before a man who bade me not be frightened—though the water was very deep, and it blew and rained, as it seems to me, I have never seen it blow or rain since—and telling me to look how Black Bess got along, and what a brave swimmer she was ; and that I should soon see papa and mamma, and have hot tea and buns. I

remember it. And then the man—Mr.—Mr.—Yates—yes, Yates—that was the name, saying, ‘Here we are, all safe.’ And Black Bess scrambling up the bank; and then dreadful faces, men and women—the gipsies!—they pulled me off the horse; and Hesther caught me up in her arms and carried me away, and there was a great noise and confusion!

“All is coming back to me now in the strangest way; *I* was that child, I had long curls of yellow hair then—mother used to love me for my curls.”

“Then it was you that were wronged and lost—lost owing to my crime! For, when they showed the body of a child, everybody looked upon it as settled, and there was no further search made.

“This, at least, is what my uncle told me when he paid me the hundred pounds. I troubled myself no further about the matter. I have not thought of *that* part of the business as I ought to have done.”

The boy spoke not, he was thinking deeply. He was endeavouring to connect his recollec-

tions together, so as to make a continuous story of the fragments of remembrances that lay confused together, and had thus suddenly reverted to his memory.

For some time he had suspected that he was not a gipsy child. So soon as he came to years of understanding, the fiction of his fairy origin, imposed upon him no longer. He had heard and learnt enough to divine that his vague recollections were remembrances of the time when he was other from what he was then. But as Charles terminated his story, a sudden flash of light seemed to revive the fondest images of the past. His grandmother's home, where he had been staying, and which he perfectly well recollected; though he had much fainter and more confused images of his father's castle, the remembrance of the night, the storm, the crossing the ford, Mr. Yates—all was vivid and clear.

“And cannot you tell me the name of the father to whom I belonged? I remember him faintly, a delicate, slender young man; and my mother—oh yes, I remember her well! In

white, as I kneeled upon her knee. Cannot you—cannot you tell me their names?”

“No, I know nothing of their names.”

“The part of the kingdom where this happened?”

“No, I know nothing of that.”

“Then how am I to trace it out? How am I to recover my parents—my home—all that I have lost?”

“Nay, I don’t know. So you have forgotten me! You are turned aside upon a wild-goose chase to look after your parents, and you care not to hear of the Lord’s dealings with me. It was to proclaim those, young man, that I began telling you this story—but you care not for tidings from Zion.”

“Not now! not just now—another time. I should be a hypocrite if I pretended that at this moment, I could hear of anything but myself, and my own strange history! Good man, have patience with me. Another time, and you shall tell me all that the Almighty has done for you; but not now, not now, my heart is too big; but what can I do?”

“Nay, just nothing, it’s my opinion. The

story is an old one, all this happened years ago. Besides, everybody is dead—my uncle is dead; my father is dead; I never heard the thing spoken of again. People do not talk of such matters when once they are over. The whole affair is passed out of people's minds; besides, what could you do? Come and say you were heir to such a one's estate, and ask him to turn out, and make room for you?"

"If the estate were mine by right, I should expect he would."

"Why, you cannot be such a ninny. No, no, no, don't set your mind upon that, but do as I would have you. Follow me—let us carry the good news of the gospel, and the gospel in body itself, to these deserted wildernesses of society, where light and warmth, the knowledge of God, and the love of God, and the peace of God never come."

## CHAPTER III.

“WE must have that over again, that last went charmingly.”

And he leaned his violoncello against his knee, and looked up at her, turning over the leaves of his music-book as he did so, and humming the strain carelessly to himself.

She turned back the leaves of her book, placed her fair hands upon the pianoforte, and most obligingly began again.

This time the piece went better than ever.

“Bravo!” cried he, as he drew a long terminating tone upon the C string of his violoncello. “We played that charmingly.”

The young lady turned her head and looked towards the windows.

The sun was shining very bright, and the air came in wooingly; and birds were singing, and the flower-garden and shrubbery were blooming with all the sweet blossoms of May. She longed to go out, and she would have said so, only she loved him better than he loved her, and she had let him know it; and he was selfish in his habits, though good-natured enough in his temper, and he took it some way as a matter of course, that what he wished, was to be done.

"I feel in the humour for that concert of Beethoven," said he.

"I don't think that will go well without a violin accompaniment," she replied. "You know it is for violin and violoncello obbligato."

"True, we shall make a hash of it, for you don't play Beethoven well. I cannot inspire you with his spirit. Such a grand spirit of composition! Such depth of resource! Such learning! Such combinations!"

“I think I like Czerny better,” she said, smothering a groan with some difficulty, and again looking towards the window. “It looks very pleasant upon the terrace to-day,” she added.

He looked mortified, and glanced at her with something very like vexation in his face; but she looked so pretty and elegant, as she sat there half-aside upon her music-stool, one little hand resting upon the keys of her pianoforte, the other dandling with the ribbon of her sash; her fair face turned towards the window, showing the beautiful contour of her head and throat to such perfection, that, music-mad as he was, he could not be long angry. He got up, and reared his violoncello against the wall; and she, glad as a child released from her task, started up from her music-stool, and was out in a moment through the window.

He looked now quite cross; as vexed, at least, as a young man about to be married to a very pretty creature, with a very handsome fortune, could look or feel; but, in truth, there was a something about her which would have



pleased many men, but with which he could not be pleased. A childish, thoughtless gaiety—a yielding, good-humoured disposition—with a very great desire to oblige *him* in every possible way, and with every possible partiality in his favour, so that do what he would, he could neither vex or disoblige her, though he was perpetually feeling, that the things he most wished her to do she did against the grain, merely and solely to please him; and the things he most wished her to admire and enjoy, she really thought very tiresome and dull, and only pretended to think fine because he said so. In short, *that* all was unfortunately done, not from sympathy, but complaisance—not because she felt *with* him, but *about* him.

Many men would have been flattered and attracted, and their tenderness and affection excited, by such complying love, such anxious desire to please and be acceptable. But he was of a different disposition. He was not an ill-natured fellow, and therefore he bore it with good temper; and that is all we can say for him. He was not a brute; he managed to

tolerate being adored, without being down right brutal.

The day was very fine ; he thought so as well as she did ; and did not very much care after all whether he played the Beethoven or strolled in the garden : so he followed her out of the window, and walked up and down with his hands in his pockets, whilst she flitted like a butterfly from flower to flower, gathering first one and then another, bringing to him, as offerings, any that were more than usually beautiful—doing everything she could think of that was flattering and attentive, in order to please him ; not sagacious enough to perceive how sadly she failed, or to understand the dull, *hébété*, dissatisfied expression with which he flung himself down upon a garden-seat, and could have cursed the cloudless beauty of the day.

He sat there, looking anything but as he ought to have done—being, as he was, an accepted man, and accepted by the very pretty girl now amusing herself among the flowers upon the terrace borders, to say nothing of the

fine summer weather and of the beautiful view which his eye, as he sat there, might have commanded, had he but looked at it.

But he looked down upon the turf instead, kicking a pebble about with his heel—listless dull, and uncomfortable, he knew not why ; as completely weary of having all things his own way, as any rich and idle young man could be ; ready to shoot himself for want of something else ; miserable from the mere misery of having nothing to wish for and nothing to do ! But then what misery is more insupportable ?

The prospect was indeed most beautiful which thus, like everything else, palled upon his sense. The terrace crossed a slope covered with turf, flower-beds, and shrubberies, which fell to the broad, majestically flowing river below, crossed at no great distance by a fine stone bridge ; not far from which, the hoary towers of the ancient cathedral lifted their kingly crowns, like those of some ancient Saxon monument, above the secular elms and oaks which surrounded it.

The sky was of that deep, clear blue rarely

seen in England, and one or two white clouds slowly floated against it. Now and then a rook, winging its way to the rookery in the cathedral close, might be descried; giving that beautiful effect to this quiet scene which such an object produces; whilst the town, stretched far and wide, with house-tops of all sizes and forms—for it was a very ancient one—and its numerous church towers and spires, gradually melted, as it were, away among the copses and trees of the rich country. This lovely picture lay framed in a sort of basin formed by hills rising into mountains, peak behind peak, and swell above swell, till they were finally lost in distance.

- He was an artist, or rather had been an amateur artist, and had loved sketching, but that had for some time been given up. He was weary of drawing, as he was weary of everything.

The fair girl came and went, came and went. Now she gathered one rose, and now she gathered another. Anon it was a bunch of mignonette, and then a pre-eminently beautiful carnation; the flowers were all

paragons in their sort, cultivated with exceeding care by the Dean's gardener.

For the Dean loved flowers, as he loved everything else that was beautiful and excellent in its way ; and above all, he loved order, and regular persevering attention to a man's proper business. So, having gardens and gardeners, he chose that his gardeners should mind their business, and his gardens be well kept.

The Dean was a man of a calm, well regulated temper, of a sound rather than what can properly be called a fine intellect ; for he was removed from all that could be called mean, calculating, selfish, or sensual ; yet, perhaps equally incapable of anything very high, lofty, or enthusiastic. A dignitary of that church, so temperate in her speech, so moderate in her views and her discipline, he belonged to a school and to a day, which carried this temperance and moderation of view, to a point that verged upon indifference.

His life had been passed in a too serene region ; he had not experienced those storms and buffetings of life which compel men to seek for something warmer, more cordial, more

close to the heart than this calm and measured feeling. What religion he had, sufficed for his own wants, and he had lived too dignified a life, had mingled too little with the striving, struggling, agonising world of suffering and temptation below him, to be adequately aware how much more than this might be wanted.

He was a good man, nevertheless, in his way—thoroughly good, though in a rather circumscribed circle of goodness; but possessing his own soul in tranquillity as he did, he was little aware of the intensity with which certain wants might be felt by others.

His conduct about his daughter's engagement was much of a piece with the rest of his life, and affords no bad example of the way in which he took things; and no bad proof, likewise, that this is a way, in which it will not exactly do to take them.

He loved his daughter, and had been as kind a father as a man of his disposition and habits could be. He took care, in the first place, to provide her with an ample fortune, a fortune considerably above what her position in life

really demanded. For though he was liberal of his money, generous and charitable among the poor, and ready handsomely to subscribe in aid of any charitable schemes of which others undertook the trouble—he considered himself perfectly justified in hoarding for his daughter, laying by for her a portion much larger than girls in her position usually received.

Then as to her education, he resolved to spare nothing upon that. That his wife, Lady Matilda, was a silly woman, and quite incapable of directing it, he was fully aware; but it does not seem to have suggested itself to him, that it would be well to supply that want which his own selection of a wife had occasioned, by personal exertions of his own. He took the matter in a plain, straight-forward, every day sense, without any anxious over refinements. A good school was the proper substitute for home education with an only child, under such circumstances, and accordingly he sent her to the best he could hear of; and at school, with the intervals of the holidays, the fair Maria had remained, till it was time to come home, and be introduced and married.



And a pretty, pleasing, accomplished girl, as we have seen, Maria came back—with a good heart and easy temper, which really wanted little helping, and her intellects, such as they were, neither cultivated nor developed in the least degree.

Everything had, as usual, been learnt by rote ; it was all mere surface teaching ; producing effects, if brilliant, most shallow ; nothing of mind, nothing of reflection, nothing of character, nothing correct, serious, interesting, could be so produced, or was.

A pretty, empty, creature ! a poor companion for a sensible man.

The Dean troubled himself not about that matter, but was quite satisfied to find his daughter amiable, elegant, and accomplished. As he never talked with her, never entered into any of those sweet confidences which sometimes subsist between fathers and daughters, he knew not how much was wanting. Perhaps he would not have detected the defect, even had he given himself the opportunity to become acquainted with it. The man who had married Lady



Matilda for her pretty face, and had been well enough satisfied ever since with his bargain, was not one to require much from women as companions.

The affair of his daughter's settlement in life, which he was very far from regarding with equal indifference, had been carried out upon the same principle of superficial propriety as all the rest. The Dean had long marked out Philip Gorhambury as the proper man. He united every condition of suitability and eligibility that would be required. Fortune, station, propinquity—no small matter this last as regarded one who would have abhorred the idea of leaving his loved Deanery, and re-entering the great world to introduce his daughter. This match lay close at hand, under his eye, whilst at the same time it was evident that nothing would be more agreeable than the connection to Mr. and Mrs. Gorhambury.

It does not seem to have mattered that the Dean secretly much disliked Mr. Gorhambury—that he neither esteemed his character, nor approved of his conduct, nor relished his company, or that still more, there was lurking in his

mind a kind of hidden, ill-defined distrust of him.

Mr. Gorhambury was a man of large estate, and of a good old family; therefore, to allow weight to any of the above objections in such a case would, in the opinion of such a man as the Dean, have been romantic and absurd to the highest degree. Neither did he admire Mrs. Gorhambury much more. He thought her cold, conceited, and interested. Nor even, if truth must be told, did he very particularly affect the son.

Philip Gorhambury was clever, sensible, and gentlemanlike, well informed, accomplished, and very good-looking; and yet the Dean did not like him much. But he, nevertheless, was very well pleased to have him marry his daughter.

Such is the way of the world.

The Dean sat in his library, made arrangements that the repairs of his cathedral might be done in the finest taste—and so they were; looked after his choristers—and his choir was celebrated throughout England; walked about his gardens—enjoyed the magnificent view his terrace commanded, or listened

to the grunt of the violoncello, and the brilliant tones of Maria's pianoforte, as they sounded through the open window of the dining-room, and was contented, and troubled himself no further.

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Philip Gorhambury still sits there. His eyes fixed upon the turf, as he kicks the pebble with his heel, and never once lifting them up to watch his pretty *fiancée* strolling about. The expression of his face, if you could have seen it—but that would be rather difficult, he keeps it down so—is, melancholy?—Not quite. Ill-humoured?—Not quite. Moody?—Yes.

He is brooding in a sort of discontented, dissatisfied way, upon his prospects in life, and with every possession that in common opinion can make life enjoyable, asking what on earth there can be worth living for? He sickens at the sunshine; is disgusted with the comforts that surround him; detests the monotony of his easy existence; hates his friends; hates society; hates hunting and shooting; almost hates Maria, and entirely hates himself.

He thinks of his father's fine castle and grounds, which appear to him as the very cause of spleen ; of the Dean's complete establishment, his elegant and comfortable house, and his handsome well-kept garden ; and what can all these do for him ? What cares he for comforts, the want of which he has never known, for splendour, the possession of which he has never enjoyed ? Only once in his life had he really cared for anything, and that was a little sanded kitchen, and a tall, thin, dark girl sitting in it. But that is an old charm, something too much out of the way, ever to have been realised. He has long learned to look upon that as a fantastic, preposterous vision.

To marry Hernana !

The idea might, nay, certainly had crossed his mind once or twice, and seriously ; but this was in those romantic, moon-calf days, when he was half-boy, half-man. All lads have some such absurd love notions in their heads at one time or other ; of course they never come to anything. Besides, Hernana was gone, he knew not whither—somewhere to the continent with her father, to try this or that bath. She

never wrote to him, or to any one he knew. He had lost sight of her altogether for the last two years.

Those two years he himself had spent in the great world—partly in London, partly at Paris, Florence, Rome, or Naples. In these places he had exhausted all his passion for art. For his was not the true inspiration of genius—it had been rather an acquired taste learned from his mother, than the strong, genuine leaning of nature. And when he had seen the master-pieces of Italy, and in those situations so admirably adapted to display their perfections, his fastidious taste rejected everything that was inferior with disgust; so what he learned by his travels was not so much what were the true pictures to enjoy, as how very few master-pieces there were to be admired, and to despise everything short of perfection.

He left off sketching, he left off designing, he left off colouring, he could no longer please himself. His violoncello he still clung to, but he was becoming weary even of that.

He understood himself as little as his mother understood him.

His was, in truth, an earnest, serious, ardent character, formed for strenuous exertion and lofty efforts. But there was no call in his easy, well-provided life, for such great qualities; and he was wanting in that high tone of thought, that sense of duty and responsibility, which makes every life so serious and deeply interesting.

And oh! "How stale, flat and unprofitable doth seem to him the uses of this world."

He has been sitting in this mood some time. The figure that floats before his mind's eye, is certainly not one of a fair, blue-eyed girl, with a pretty pleasant countenance, a slight figure, particularly well dressed, and lovely ringlets of golden hair.

But this sweet creature now comes up to him, she begins to be tired of being taken no notice of, and she says :

"What may the superb Philip Gorhambury be thinking of, that he pulls so particularly long a face to day? Knight of the dolorous

visage, explain to me the subject of your lucubrations."

And as she spoke she laid a very fair, but rather too slender, hand upon his shoulder.

He started, wriggled his shoulders, as if something disagreeable touched them, and settling himself upon the seat, pursued the very interesting occupation in which he was engaged, not speaking indeed, but feeling very ill-humoured.

"Dear me, how very polite we are! Why, if my hand had been a toad, you could not have shaken it off more unceremoniously. Well, well—as Harriet Manvers used to say—men are incomprehensible creatures. I can't think what that little stone has done to you, that you kick it about so. Now, Philip—now," sitting down by him, "don't be so cross: just do me the enormous favour to look up, and tell me whether you ever in your life saw such a beautiful collection of roses?"

She put her fair hand under his chin, and would have lifted up the sulky face.

But he shook the hand off again, more

ill-humouredly than before, and this time he spoke:

“You do plague one so—”

“Oh!” said she, a little sulky in her turn, and turning away, so that her back was towards him, “oh!—”

“Can’t you let one alone? I beg your pardon, Maria, but that’s a way you have. Every man has his sullen moments, and a woman should know when to let him alone.”

This most modified concession, and half-sort of implied apology, was a good deal, I can tell you, from Mr. Philip Gorham-bury, and a good deal more than she was accustomed to; but some way this time it did not produce its usual effect. She felt hurt and offended at the rebuff she had received, and she still continued to turn away from him.

She began to pull the beautiful roses to pieces, and to scatter the leaves upon the ground.

“Oh! very well,” said he. “We are angry, are we? Just as you please: I did not mean to offend you.”



“ Oh, Philip !” turning her head to him, and a tear standing in each eye, “ how unkind you are to me ! I sometimes think you cannot love me at all.”

“ Nonsense ! love ! Women—girls, at least, have such foolish notions about love—love and nonsense ! You don’t think men keep going down upon their knees, and worshipping the bright eyes of their beloveds, from morning till night, now-a-days, do you ? How can you be so absurd ? One gets tired of making love ; and besides, I always hated making love—I never was a good hand at it. Do not be foolish, Maria !”

And he put his hand under her chin now, and tried to turn the poor little sorrowful face, which was again averted, towards him.

The slight caress appeased her, for she was naturally of a sweet, placable temper, and she turned her face to him and smiled.

She forgave too soon, perhaps ; and yet, if she had maintained the appearance of ill-humour, would he have liked her the better for it ?

Alas ! he cared not for her ; no mood of hers could interest him.

“ You are a very naughty boy, Philip,” she said, trying to rally and to be lively, and, as she fancied, captivating, “ and you deserve that I shouldn’t look at, or speak to you again for the whole day. You are the most ungallant of lovers, and deserve that I should punish you well ; and I have a good mind to do it by getting up and walking away, and not seeing or speaking to you till dinner-time.”

He thought this speech as vapid and stupid as you do ; and the worst of it was, would have been very glad if she would have been as good as her word, and would have taken herself away and left him for some hours.

His thoughts had travelled far in another direction, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he brought them back. He was thinking of times earnest, simple, sincere, and hew as longing to escape and get into the town and make his way to the old deserted Parsonage, which had now been shut up for nearly two years.

Mr. Gorhambury had, in consideration for Mr. Lovel, taken a temporary curate, who occupied lodgings in the town. The old parsonage-house had, therefore, been deserted.

She tried to coquette with him a little more, making use of her roses and her mignonette as the medium of her little innocent *agaceries*. The tears were hardly dry in her eyes, yet she was already smiling, her cheeks looked like two roses themselves, and her face was really very sweet and pretty.

Pity, pity, pity! It was all lost upon *him*. The magic influence was wanting, and where that is wanting it is all one. Pretty or ugly, amiable or the reverse, it matters not. Thus a half-hour was dawdled most unsatisfactorily away—she trying to please, and he, at least gracious enough to try to appear pleased—when, to his infinite relief, Maria's maid appeared at the other end of the terrace, and coming up, said, her lady was waiting for Miss Westmore to try a new dress. Would she please to come?

Upon which, Maria arose, and slowly loitering along took the way to the house, hoping that Philip would follow her; but he did not. He

remained sitting where he was till she was fairly out of sight, and then he rose and traversing the terrace with quick steps, quitted the garden by another way.

## CHAPTER IV.

It was a strange humour that Philip Gorbambury had indulged, as he sat musing upon that seat on the terrace, insensible to all the beauty of external nature around him. Dreams of other days, those visions of the past which sometimes rise with such unexpected force, calling up emotions long buried, in comparison with which the present is as nothing, had risen up like spectres before him.

Spectres of the past they were, some melancholy, some most happy, some accusing ! They might be compared to those airy forms by which Retzsch strives to give visible existence to

such fleeting fancies floating before the mind's eye. Some with earnest, most sincere expression, filled with a certain grave and serious hope, others smiling and tender, breathing a peaceful joy ; but the forms which closed the procession gradually darkened into sadness and melancholy, and their eyes spoke a gentle, mournful reproach.

He could not bear this. This earnest, serious past contrasted as it was with the smooth, shallow, insipid present. This present of tranquillity without repose—of peace, where there was no peace. This unruffled calm of life was to him as irritating as a dead calm at sea, where all is bright and shining, and all immovably passive and still proves to the enterprising and impatient mariner.

Looking up, his eye had traversed the landscape which lay spread out so beautifully before him, and suddenly had caught what he thought must be the pointed gables of the old parsonage house. He had been immediately seized with an irresistible desire to visit the spot once more, a spot he had never ventured to go near since his return home.

He descended the stone steps that led from the terrace, and following a winding walk which passed through the shrubberies upon the slopes below, he came to a little iron wicket, that let him out upon a wide road leading towards the town.

To his great satisfaction, the road was at present entirely deserted, not a single passenger was to be seen upon it. Tall hedges rose upon either side of this wide well kept way, and high hawthorns nodded, and roses and honeysuckles grew slantingly. It was charming, as are the ways in that rich romantic country, where every hedgerow has its peculiar character of beauty.

It was a lovely afternoon. The sun shining so brightly over all. The dark blue sky so clear. The birds creeping and making their still sounds in the bushes, for singing days were over; the murmur of the distant town!

These things soften and attune the heart into harmony with high and tender thoughts; and all that was imaginative, and all that

was simple and pure in Philip Gorhambury's feelings were excited.

So he went along this pleasant highway, moving rapidly, and his heart very full ; but as he approached the town he could not bear to enter the High Street, and mingle with the people there ; quiet as the High Street at G—— usually was ; so he turned down a little by-lane, which he knew would lead him in the direction of the old Parsonage.

It led that way, but through wretched streets and narrow filthy alleys, such as one too often finds on the outskirts of a pretty large town, especially if that town has not been very well kept and attended to, and no sanitary commission been there.

Sanitary commissions were not in existence in those days ; but sometimes good citizens, men advanced in years, who had retired from business, yet had preserved their active and industrious habits, employed their leisure in looking after such things, and encouraging order and cleanliness ; but where this was neglected, as it had been here, the effect was grievous.



The wretched rows of cottages, ruinous for want of decent repairs, were fronted by rugged broken palings, which separated the lane from the adjacent fields. The lane unpaved, filled with ruts and holes, mostly reeking with stagnant water, was a receptacle for all the dirt and litter, thrown by the inhabitants out of doors; cleansed only by the cart of the scavenger, which might appear once or twice a month. Dirty children, dirty mothers, with torn unmended gowns, and caps half off their heads, were hanging about the doorways; mewling infants and scolding wives, were heard through the open doors.

Our poet, and man of taste and refinement, hurried along, flying the disgusting scene as he would have done the pestilence. It never once entering his head to associate himself in any manner with it. To remember that these poor creatures were of the same brotherhood as himself, and to ask, whether the superfluity of time, money, and luxury, which was his portion, might not be in some degree employed to their benefit.

He thought of nothing but of hastening by,

and soon got out of this vile suburb ; and then, through little narrow streets of somewhat more decent appearance, he at last arrived at the well known open space, where the ancient parsonage stood.

I forgot whether I told you that this gloomy old mansion—which Mrs. Gorhambury would have found it impossible to exist in, and which offended her husband's ideas of state and propriety as much as her's of elegance and comfort—had, by him, been given up to his curate Mr. Lovel. Mr. Gorhambury occupying a handsome house in one of the fashionable streets.

It was now, and long had been, silent and deserted, for the gentleman who had undertaken the duty during Mr. Lovel's absence, being a single man, had preferred lodging elsewhere ; so that the old parsonage had been left to take care of itself, with the exception of such attention as a very old woman who lived in a small house hard by afforded it.

The little iron wicket which led into the garden was not, however, locked ; but the latch

was so rusted, that it could scarcely be moved. He laid his hand upon it and endeavoured to open it, which, though not without some violence, he effected. The latch yielded, the gate opened, and gave him admittance to this melancholy wilderness.

There lay the gravel walk before him, leading straight up to the old house, with its front of narrow gables, each one surmounted with a cross and containing a casement window. Opposite to him was the ancient oak door and quaint porch, with its little windows upon each side, and its hoary walls covered with trailing shrubs and evergreens—when last he had been there, all neatly trimmed and led along the walls, now lying in wildest confusion, torn down or dropping by the weight of their unpruned branches. Rich crimson and snow-white roses, dark masses of purple virgin-bower, lauristinas and honey suckles, mingled together in a confusion of desolation that would have furnished a rich picture for Tennyson's pencil.

He would have done it justice in a few words. I cannot. The old dark-brick house stood mournfully amidst all these masses of verdure

and flowers, seeming to look out through her closed, small-paned windows, with a most disconsolate air. All was perfectly still; doors and windows shut; the door without not only closed but grown over; for a large white rose-bush tumbling from its fastening had fallen right across it, and its snowy flowers and green leaves half buried the small steps. These steps were moss-grown, and long strings of the blue periwinkle, which grew in the border under the house, had covered them so, that a certain skill in pioneering seemed necessary to make your way to the door, and seize the knocker.

He had no woodman's bill with him to clear an entrance, but he had no idea of making one. He stood there looking mournfully round at this picture of desolation, upon which the glorious mid-day sun, as if in mockery, was brightly shining.

Recollections were thronging thick upon him.

Recollections! he had not till that moment imagined how dear!

That one! that earnest master-spirit, before which his seemed to bow, but bow with pleasure, as one would bend before the image of

those angels which "excel in strength." In whose society life, and its calls, and its duties, took such a serious aspect: Where the grand majestic sorrow gave interest and value to the sweet passing joy! With whom he felt altogether a different man—a sobered, serious, feeling, worthy man! Yes, worthy! For was there not worth in every sentiment she inspired?

Her, whose existence seemed at once so simple and sublime! where love or desire of wealth and ambition, and art, and the love of beauty, and all that constitutes what is emphatically called the world, lost their weight and their power to thrall! and the emancipated soul seemed to breathe a purer, brighter atmosphere rising into the empyrean, into the infinite element as it were!

Where, where was she now?

And, oh grief! remorse! and regret! wherever she might be, what was she to him?

For had he not given, thrown himself away, sold himself and that precious inner life of his, to the outward conventionalities of the world, to proprieties and suitabilities, and the grati-

fication of tastes that were, after all, not his real tastes ! Tastes for what ? For music and pictures, and æsthetics, as they call them, and had lost the higher life ! the life of our life !

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He stood there gazing some little time mournfully, as I have said, and then he stealthily crept round the house, taking the little well-known, gravelled path, now green with damp moss, and with the grass, once so neatly trimmed on either side, now falling in decayed masses upon it. He wanted, and yet he almost feared, to go to that window, the window which he had so often approached with such pleasure, when he caught the bright blaze of the fire glaring upon the little open casement, and looking in, he had seen that fine dark girl engaged in her wholesome, daily toils of usefulness and kindness.

With what rapture had he then been wont to catch the first glance of that eye, when startled and surprised by his sudden appearance, she had not time to conceal the first bright flash of delight.

The window was closed like all the rest now ; and like the rest, around it lay a wilderness of vegetable disorder, the more unsightly, as there were no flowers or ornamental shrubs to redeem it. Old pot-herbs, grown into huge branchy brushwood ; a pear-tree all knotted and full of useless and deformed boughs, and so on.

He, however, approached the window. He *would* look in. He was in a humour to drink this cup of wormwood to the dregs. He would fill his soul with the melancholy image of that once cheerful little chamber, now dark and unoccupied.

He was mistaken there, however, for as he drew near the window to look, a faint glimmer from within was perceptible. There was a small fire blazing in the kitchen grate, and a very old woman, in a very old gown and a very old bonnet, was upon her knees, engaged in scrubbing the floor. A lean and melancholy cat was the only other occupant of the kitchen ; it was walking up and down the dresser, under the shelves, mewing and restless.

He stood there rivetted to the spot, looking

in, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy, indeed ; indulging his recollections without restraint.

Not troubled by any conscientious scruples was he. He had allowed himself a strange sort of sophistry as regarded poor, pretty Maria, having settled it with himself that it was all her own doing, that it was her too undisguised partiality which had drawn him to this step ; that she had chosen him, not he her ; and that if he did not and could not care for her, that was her look out, not his. There was nothing approaching to treachery on his part, for who could help their feelings ?

So he indulged his waywardness without the least compunction. When he was in the humour to like her, it was all very well ; he gave vent to the passing satisfaction, and she was excessively happy. When he was in the mood to quarrel with his lot, and to consider her as shallow, childish, and uninteresting, he did himself no violence to conceal that either ; and she was perplexed and unhappy, not knowing what to make of him. She was too ignorant of human nature and of the ways of



man, to conceive that one who seemed at times so kind, could in reality be so indifferent.

He continues standing there, now, however, with his face close to the casement, perfectly careless or insensible to any wrong he may be doing his betrothed, by the regrets he is indulging. And he had stood there some time, when suddenly the old woman, lifting up her head, was aware of a man close to the window. She uttered a cry, and called out :

“ Who’s there ? What do you want ? What are you doing there ? ” getting up at the same time, and looking a good deal frightened.

A second glance at the casement, however, satisfied her that it was no horrid burglar endeavouring, with nefarious purpose, to enter and rob this house, in which there was no earthly thing to be stolen ; but a very well-dressed and handsome young gentleman, with a new and fashionable hat upon his head, who was thus intently watching her operations.

So, after settling her old black bonnet, untying and tying her apron, and tidying her dress in other respects a little, she approached the window, undid the long-closed casement

with some difficulty, and asked him : “ What he was pleased to want ? ”

“ Nothing, thank you ! I merely turned into the old garden to look about me a little.”

“ Mr. Gorhambury, Sir ? Mr. Philip Gorhambury, Sir ! My goodness, Sir ! It is you, sure enough ! What a mortal long time it be, since I have set my eyes on your blessed face ! ”

“ My blessed face ! I’ll be hanged if I ever saw yours, though, my good old lady ! ”

“ Never saw mine ! Now, my dear boy, how can you talk so ! Sure enough, you must remember old Betty ? ”

“ Betty ! Betty ! Oh ! sure enough, as you say, I *do* remember you now ! And how has it been with you, old Betty, since you and I last met—how long ago ? ”

“ Bad enough ! bad enough ! and long enough ago ! Two years—two mortal years since ye all went away ! First, you took yourself off, Mr. Philip ; and then my poor master, and sweet Miss Hernana, and Lady Aylmer, and all ! All my friends at once ! But seeing you all flew away together, I reckon

you're all coming back together ; for here's you first ; and if I beant scouring this very kitchen, a getting it ready for *them* !”

“ How ! you don't say so ? Coming back ! I thought they were at Aix—Carlsbad—Barèges—who knows ?—somewhere for his health ; that he could not live in England, and that they were away, for nobody knows how long ! Coming back, did you say ?”

“ Yes, Sir ! a-coming back, as sure as my name's Betty Besom ! I had a letter come to me from Miss Hernana yesterday is a week, with orders to begin and cleanse the old house from top to bottom, and riddle up the old furniture—law ! but it *be* old, beant it ?—and get all ready agin they come back, which was to be in about a month or so from this time, or may be sooner, may be later—she could not exactly say when ; for it seems Mr. Lovel was still in a very precarious state, and it was uncertain how he could travel, sometimes he getting along pretty comfortable, at others making long stops, you see.”

He stood after she had said this for a moment quite still and speechless.

I don't exactly know how to describe the odd feeling he had about his heart. A young lady would probably have fainted—he leaned against the side of the window.

At last gasping and gulping, and with a strange choking about his throat, he managed to get out:

“You haven't got the letter about you, have you?”

“Aye, Sir, I think I have,” fumbling in her handkerchief. “I mostly keeps it pinned here; for it's not often I gets a letter, and when I does, I makes a sort of a treasure of it. More especially when it comes from Miss Hernana; for that young woman's a rare one, if ever there was one in the world; and her father's as good in his way, as she in her'n; and as for that Lady Aylmer, she's not to sneeze at neither, to my mind.”

And thus discoursing, she kept fumbling at her old yellow handkerchief, and in process of time drew forth a letter, bearing a foreign postmark.

How he felt when he got this little scrap of paper actually into his hand—when after

more than two years of total silence and absolute separation—as absolute as the separation by death—eighteen months of partial, and three months of declared infidelity upon his part, he found her thus brought before him again, I leave those to imagine who have experienced such things, and despair of making any one understand who has not.

Total separation, like death, seems to weaken, and at last obliterate, the strongest affections: and yet they lie, but motionless, as man lies in the grave. They are not dead, but sleeping: and at the appearance of the beloved object, they are restored in their full brightness and vivacity, like pictures drawn in sympathetic ink when exposed to the fire.

His hands trembled, his eyes almost refused their office, so dimmed were they—his brain seemed almost incapable of comprehension, it was reeling so, as he, with his heart now beating with violence, now stopping, as if it would never beat again, read the few simple hurried lines before him. They were written in a hasty, but large and legible hand,

evidently intended to suit with Betty's literary capacities.

“Barèges, June 14.

“My dear Betty,

“This is to tell you, my dear, good woman, that at last the doctors have decided that, not all the waters in the world can do anything more for my dear father; and he so wearies to get home, and to his parish again, that I could be almost glad of it. We are to start from this place next week, and shall travel by easy journeys home. So, my good woman, lose no time, after the receipt of this letter, in putting the old place into a little order.

“Go and ask Mr. Bencraft, the churchwarden, to lend you five pounds, which you must make go as far as *ever* you can; and get in some coals, and have the house well *aired* and cleaned down, and things put a little to rights, that they may look comfortable for my father when he comes home. But above all things, take care the house is *well*

*aired*. It must be very damp, I fear: so, though I told you to be sparing of the money, don't spare in coals; for if my father should get a fresh chill, it would be very bad for him.

“Take care of *that*, dear, good woman, and put two feather beds and two mattresses on *his* bed; so you must take both my mattress and my little feather bed—I am used to sleep upon straw here—and I will show you how to make it do very well. I will write to you again, by and bye; but set to work as soon as you get this, for I do hope we shall be at home soon.

“Your affectionate friend,

“HERNANA LOVEL.”

“P.S.—You need not go to any expense about the garden, which I dare say is in a horrid state. I will see to that myself when I get home, which I think will be in about a month after you will receive this.”

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He turned the letter about, no address or date ; nothing more.

“ And how long is it, since you got this ? ”

“ A week, come to-morrow, wasn’t it ? I can’t be quite sure. Stay ! not so much as that.”

“ And in about a month they will be back ? ”

“ Ay, so it says ; don’t the letter, Sir ? I spelled it all out myself : it’s written in such a nice big hand.”

“ Be back in about a month ! ” and he put his hand to his head, for he felt bewildered.

“ Yes, Sir ; yes, Sir.”

“ About a month—about a month !—And no address, no possible means of communication ! And in about a month, about a month ! ”

And then there rose a pageant of what was to come off in about a month, too.

A wedding, and bridesmaids ! and wedding breakfast, and fine dresses, and trinkets ! He was sick of the whole subject, for he had heard so much about it ; and of the trinkets his mother had been so busy designing for him,



and helping him too with designs for trinkets for her ; they were to be in an exquisite taste, a taste more than common.

And now these things rose in a sort of ghastly mockery before him ! The bridesmaids looked like wan ghosts, and the dresses, and the presents, and the breakfast, and those abhorred trinkets ! And, in the midst of all, the bride, looking so fair and so fresh-coloured, with her long golden ringlets so bright, and smiling, and looking so pleased and happy !

Fool ! looking so content and happy !

And then, in contrast with this gay and gaudy butterfly, there rose a figure, with her pale thin face, and her dark earnest eyes ! and her tall, noble, though attenuated figure ! a figure built for large development, but yet never entirely developed. Those long, thin, but graceful arms ! those simple, unaffected yet most interesting movements ! that figure, in short, instinct with soul !

And what a soul !

What an intellect, and what a heart ! and what a noble, noble character.

He could bear these thoughts no longer. He turned away, and leaving the old woman to her scrubbing, made his way through the desolate garden, and so to the Deanery, where he was at present staying upon a visit.

## CHAPTER V.

“WHAT is the matter with my son?” said Mrs. Gorhambury. The whole family, including Mr. Gorhambury himself, were at present staying at the Deanery. “What is the matter with *mein Sohn*? that he looks so melancholy and Werter-like, and sits solitary upon this sofa, remote as the Atlantic isles, poring over a book, which book I am certain he is *not* reading; whilst a bright galaxy of wax lights is kindling at the pianoforte. The beloved violoncello is being leaned against his chair; and the fair lady of his heart, like some genius of harmony, sits there, with her locks like

threads of gold, and her cheeks like roses ! She reminds one of the fables of Aurora. What is the matter with *mein Sohn* ?” laying upon his shoulder her fair hand, white as snow, and soft as down, and sparkling with a few jewels of inappreciable value.

He answered not, kept his head down, and his eyes fixed upon his book, continuing—*not* to read.

“Nay, nay. Is the subject so deeply interesting ? Come, come !” endeavouring playfully to take the book from him. “Have done with this pretence of study, the sweet girl at the pianoforte is waiting for you.”

He placed his two hands upon the book, so as to prevent her taking it, and with a slight shrug of the shoulder, attempted to displace his mother’s hand.

“No answer ? Nay, then, something *is* the matter. Are you not well, Philip ?”

“No,” said he, bluntly, still without looking up, and keeping his eyes fixed upon the pages.

“What is the matter, dear Philip ? Look up, don’t keep your eyes turned from me in

that sulky sort of way. If you are not well, say so at once. See, fairer eyes than mine are beginning to bend anxiously upon you."

Maria had turned round upon her music-stool where she sat, waiting in dutiful expectation for her lord and master's attendance, violoncello in hand. She was looking with anxiety their way. She could not conceive what could be the matter.

Mrs. Gorhambury bent down and whispered to her son angrily.

"Philip, what new caprice is this? Really, your conduct is abominable! well or ill, get up and take your violoncello. How can you keep any woman—most of all *the* woman, waiting in this rude abominable manner."

"I am not in the humour for music, to-night."

"Not in the humour! What do you mean? Humour or not humour, the Dean, who is luckily out of the room just now, asked for music; let him find you at your place when he comes back. Beethoven he asked for, the sweet Sonata in A, with that minuet, which is

all sighs—so lovely—and you play the accompaniment so charmingly, child.”

“I like well enough to play it with you; but I hate to play it with *her*—she has not a notion of it.”

“But you can’t play it with me,” said the mother artist; all that was mother, and the far more than that, all that was artist, pleased with the compliment; for what mother is angel enough not to be a little tempted to jealousy of a son’s bride, and not to be charmed to find some little corner where there is a preference for her left. “But you can’t play it with me, you naughty, tiresome boy; and the dear thing has been practising at it from the time she came in from walking till dinner-time, and now those star-like, or dove-like eyes of her’s, are turning this way, and her little heart is calling you very unkind.”

Upon which he rose with a half-stretch, half-yawn, and drawing himself up his whole handsome height, dragged himself rather than strolled to the pianoforte; and sitting down upon the chair ready placed for him, began to take up

and handle his violoncello, and then turning the leaves of the music, which was ready prepared upon the desk, he said :

“ Well ! Where are we to begin ? ”

“ You said you wished me to learn the Beethoven Sonata, in A, and I have been trying it. It is very hard, and for my part, I cannot see much beauty in it ; but, perhaps, I shall like it better when you play it with me.”

“ No you won't. Why should you ? If you cannot enter into the divine beauties of such things without my help, what's the use of my trying to inspire you ? I never met but with two women in the world who had power enough in themselves to understand the powers of this man, and one of them is my mother. You shall hear her play Beethoven.”

Now you must know that Maria was the favourite pupil of the master most in vogue at the time ; that her finger was most brilliant, her execution splendid ; she loved to fly over and sweep the keys ; and in secret despised Cramer and all his school, and the somewhat common-place and emphatic style of expression with which the pupils of that once renowned

master, who still linger at the keys, are apt to render their meanings. She had no taste for Beethoven; but Beethoven squeezed out of the keys by Mrs. Gorhambury she detested. Also, though she was very good-humoured and unaffected, and not apt to pique herself upon anything, if there was that thing upon which she did pique herself, it was her pianoforte playing; though without the least pretension to that, be it understood, in which both Mrs. Gorhambury and her son were proficient—counter point and all the points included.

Therefore Miss Westmore, though not easily offended, felt a little piqued at this last speech, and she put up her lip and said:

“Really! I didn’t know Mrs. Gorhambury was such a *great* professor.”

“It may not be necessary to be a very great professor, I suppose, to have something to teach you; or is your musical education so complete that nothing can be added to it?” he said, contemptuously, turning over the leaves of his book with the bow of his violoncello, and then drawing a splendid prolonged note across the strings.

“I don’t pretend to be a first-rate musician,



Mr. Philip Gorhambury ; but, at least, I think I may venture to say, there are not many people here, who have anything to teach *me*."

"I don't agree with you in the least."

She turned her face and gave him such a hurt, mortified glance ; this he either did not, or pretended not, to observe, but saying negligently : "Are we ever to begin ?" commenced tuning his instrument, sounding the note upon the piano-forte with his bow ; whilst she sat there uncertain whether to obey and begin, or get up from the music-stool in a pet.

"Eh bien !" he said, after waiting a few seconds, "je suis aux ordres de Mademoiselle."

What could she do ? his unruffled calmness and serenity, whilst her head was throbbing with vexation and passion, imposed upon her. Mechanically her small slender fingers run up the preliminary scale, a few chords followed, and glancing at her companion, she began.

Her soul was a musical instrument. As she proceeded she became animated, forgot her injuries, and played with her accustomed spirit and brilliancy.

The Dean who had re-entered the apartment, was delighted, and cried "Bravo" as this pre-

liminary movement came to a close. And then followed that lovely minuet—that minuet which, as some one said, is like the breath of softest sighs, almost too delicate for human ear, and which I defy any true lover of music to give to his or her perfect satisfaction. Something more than an exquisite touch will ever be wanting to render so exquisite a conception. The Dean, who loved music well, held his breath; Philip forgot everything at the moment, but the enchantment of those few and simple tones.

But Maria!

Alas! she was not made to understand such music. She found nothing particular in the strain—

“A primrose on a river’s brink,  
A yellow primrose was to her;”

and it was nothing more.

He threw down his bow in despair, and glanced at his sympathizing mother.

In such a grief as that, what mother but must sympathize?—Mrs. Gorhambury most of all mothers. In spite of her anxiety that Maria and Philip should be all in all to each other, something of the jealousy of the artist, not to

say something of the ill-nature of the artist, spoke in the meaning smile which said: "She is quite unequal to comprehend that, I own."

"What do you stop for, Mr. Gorhambury? What is amiss, a string broke? No. Shall we begin the minuet again?"

"No, thank you; I hate to hear a thing I like, mangled—I mean misunderstood. Shut the book, and let's have a galop, or a waltz, or anything you like, I can't play any more to night," said he, getting up and restoring his violoncello to its case. "I've got a confounded headache, that is it, Maria. You go playing on, will you? and I'll take a turn upon the terrace, for this room is abominably hot, and I don't know what's the matter with me."

She looked up at him again, as she had done in the morning, wistfully, pained and hurt, yet afraid to let him see it. She had so completely yielded—shall I say so weakly yielded—to her partiality for him, that she had made herself his very slave.

His very slave, because she was her own slave—the slave of her own affections.

She knew not, even in the best affections, of the virtue, the dignity, the strength there is in self-control. Poor thing! she had never been taught it.

She had never been taught the sin and the danger of idolatry. She thought a girl could not be too deeply in love with the man she was about to marry. Perhaps not, if the love be a right love, built upon something better than mere fancy, and a school-girl's first romance.

“He that hath not the rule over his own spirit, is like a city broken down, and without walls,” saith the wise man. She who has abandoned the command of her own affections is, indeed, a defenceless, feeble thing.

To please Philip Gorhambury was, to the poor Maria, the principal, one may say almost the sole object, in life; of higher objects she had the most confused and imperfect ideas.

He had been so used to receive this sort of fond idolatry from many women—weak and silly, as women so often suffer themselves in this respect to be—that he set no value upon it.

There was one that loved him in a worthier and more noble way, whose love, deep and devoted as he knew it had been, yet inspired him with a certain respect. There was that about it which he dared not have offended. That in it, to be maintained, only as it had been begun, by desert and merit.

And he went out upon the terrace again to muse upon that image, and to compare it with the faint, pale, shallow sentiment evidenced by that other in the drawing-room. A deep, intense oil painting of Domenichino, with a portrait in crayons by Angelica Kauffman.

But as he walked up and down the terrace, he soon left off comparing. He ceased to think of the poor little crayon at all ; and dwelt only upon that one—that deep earnest one, who now

weighed down with the care of a sick and impoverished father, was painfully wending her steps to her humble home.

And then he bethought himself of the overgrown, desolate wilderness of a garden which surrounded that house, making it so dark, melancholy and unlovely; and he recollected how Hernana loved flowers; and the pleasure she had taken, in keeping her garden trim, and in the good order and arrangement of her kitchen-garden, and of all around her. And then he dwelt with a sort of rapture upon her generous disregard of all these things, in comparison with others more important — of her tender, even lavish attention to her father's comforts and little pleasures, and her unflinching spirit of self-denial as regarded her own; and he contrasted this life of virtue and strength, with his own weak, self-indulgent career, and with the luxury and self-indulgence, the objectless lives of those with whom he was surrounded.

Not one among them all, in right good

earnest about anything ! Not one among them all, occupied in any more important concerns than the mere external comforts and luxuries, and the little passing distractions and successes of the day.

And he felt a worse man, and a better man. A better man ; for his aspirations, at least, were more purified and exalted. A worse man ; for he was meditating an act of signal treachery. He meditated the doing wrong ; but it seemed to his ill-regulated principles and blinded conscience, that the occasion justified the wrong, and that where affections were so well placed as his, it was justifiable to seek their gratification at any cost.

And yet he had not the honour, and the sincerity, and the manliness, I ought to say, the mere common honesty and good faith to come openly forwards, and say this.

To tell his mother, and poor pretty Maria, and the Dean, and all of them, that he had been under a mistake ; that he had pledged

himself in ignorance of the real state of his own heart ; that in the hidden recesses of that heart, another reigned, and that truth and honour, required him to do Maria this poor justice—declare his feelings, and break with her at once—rather than commit the far greater wrong of going on trifling with her affections in this manner, offering at last an absent heart—perhaps at the eleventh hour breaking with her altogether !

He had not the manliness, and the righteousness to say all this. Partly because he was a coward. His heart was not true and faithful, and could not stand by him ; he feared his mother ; he feared the tears and swoonings of Maria ; but most of all, he feared the Dean, whom he greatly respected. And then, to tell the truth—in one respect, things remained precisely as they had been, or rather worse.

Hernana was still poorer and more obscure than ever ; and his acquaintance with the world had not tended to make him relish the idea of



an obscure marriage at all, more than he had formerly done. A marriage with the Dean's daughter was quite a splendid thing—a match it was a credit to make. She was reckoned so pretty, and the Dean was so much esteemed, and said to be so wealthy; and the thing was altogether so brilliant, so respectable, and all that.

This last train of argument, though never perhaps precisely stated to himself in so many words, was not without its effect.

In short, the result of all these contradictory and jarring feelings was, as many colours make white, to end in nothing. He remained passive as regarded the main affair, and let day follow day, and the projected marriage gradually draw near, whilst he suffered his thoughts to be almost completely absorbed with the question of when she would come home? and a few other little things connected with that event.

The principal of these was the arrangement of her garden. He had nothing to do, plenty of leisure, plenty of money, and plenty of that sort of love which finds its most delightful

occupation in laying out one's superfluity upon its object.

That very night, so impatient was he, that he left the terrace and went down into the town; and sought out a gardener he happened to know, who lived in a somewhat remote corner of the place, and whom he pitched upon as the proper person to execute his plan.

To this man he accordingly went, and arranged with him that, at six o'clock the next morning, men should be set at work to put the garden at the old parsonage house into order. As for the planting and adorning it, he reserved all that part of the business to himself, indulging himself with all sorts of visionary schemes as to its arrangement, and picturing the surprise and pleasure of Hernana, when she should first, in place of a wilderness of weeds, find a very Eden of sweets, and her garden filled with the rarest and most costly flowers that could be procured.

He took the precaution not to name himself to the gardener, who was not acquainted with

his person, but to represent himself as acting under Lady Aylmer's and Miss Lovel's orders. And Lady Aylmer was so well known as the intimate friend, and almost as a member of Mr. Lovel's family, that nothing appeared more natural than that she should contribute to this little plan for adorning his abode.

Lady Aylmer was, indeed, it was generally believed, travelling with the Lovels, but nothing was exactly known. Her house, occupied during her absence by two faithful servants, was always ready swept and garnished, and there needed no premonitory signal of her return for those who so well kept watching.

So, having successfully carried out thus much of his plan, Philip Gorhambury returned to the Deanery in much better humour and spirits ; and was so unprincipled and so inconsistent as to sit down to a little supper, which it was customary at the Deanery to have served about ten o'clock, with a face from which all traces of the headache had vanished, and to talk and chat good-humouredly with

Maria. She, easily deceived, and again satisfied, laughed and prattled away, coquetted a little, and simpered a good deal; and, in short, took the very way to displease her fastidious lover, if he had been in the humour to be displeased, which at that moment he was not.

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The next morning, Philip Gorhambury, who had scarcely slept at all, kept awake by his impatience, and by the composition of all sorts of schemes for laying out gardens, which crowded into his feverish brain, was up at five o'clock, and stealing down stairs, he let himself out by the glass door which led to the terrace. From thence he rapidly passed through the still sleeping town, and came to the old rusty iron gate, between the brick walls which enclosed the parsonage garden.

He hoped to find his men already at work, but no one was there, for six had not yet struck by the cathedral clock; but it was June,

and the sun had been some time up, and the air was most fresh and sweet, and the birds all alive and busy, and the sun sparkling upon the dew drops with which the grass and herbs were bespangled.

He had all this beauty to himself; and he opened the iron gate and went into the garden, and spent the half-hour which elapsed before the workmen appeared in walking about, indulging the thick-coming memories which crowded upon him at every turn; here, there, and everywhere she was.

But when would she be back? and what would happen when she did come back? Aye, that future! what lay hidden in that future?

It was not to be penetrated; best not think of it. He dared not think of it; he would not think of it; he would think only of the present, and of the pleasure of transferring this desolate and overgrown garden into one that should be a perfect bower of bliss.

And now six o'clock rings out, and the men with their mattocks appear, and he sets them to

work ; and takes a spade himself, and begins to labour upon one particular spot with his own hands. The spot is that one she used to call her own garden ; her favourite bit of the whole. He would let no one work at that but himself ; and at it he worked hard for two good hours, till eight o'clock rung on the cathedral bell, and the labourers began to lay down their spades and prepare for their breakfasts.

And then he remembered that there was another breakfast at nine o'clock, where he would be expected. So he laid down his spade most unwillingly ; for, independently of the interesting associations, it was strange how he enjoyed the pleasant, wholesome occupation of turning up the soil ; and telling the men that he should be there again in the afternoon, and charging them not to touch the plot on which he had been engaged, he resumed his coat, which was hanging upon a rose-bush, and walked home to the Deanery.

Refreshed by the influences of the sweet

morning air and the wholesome employment in which he had been engaged, he entered the breakfast-room with a countenance glowing with health, and looking, as all thought, most particularly handsome.

## CHAPTER VI.

HIS mother looked at her Philip with undisguised admiration, as he came into the room where the party were already seated at breakfast. The Dean could not help remarking, with inward complacency, how very fine a young man he was. Maria blushed and stirred her tea.

And Mr. Gorhambury?

We have lost sight of Mr. Gorhambury for a long time.

We left him shortly after the commission of a great crime, which he would not acknowledge to himself was any crime at all; and shortly



after the perpetration of an atrocious deed, which he would persist in representing to his conscience as perfectly justifiable.

How the conscience bore this, how that voice within—that deep mystery of a voice—*another's* voice! answered to this casuistry, let that face tell. Let those spirits tell.

Mr. Gorhambury has been, ever since the morning, upon which Lady Aylmer left the Castle, in the possession of everything which he coveted, or esteemed necessary to make life desirable.

Great wealth, luxury, and above all, consequence had been his—such consequence as the world will attach to extensive possessions in land, and an ancient castle for a dwelling-place.

He had the companionship of a wife, of whom he was justly proud, for all the world admired her talents and her graces. And he had a son, handsome and clever, whom every one liked, and spoke well of; and who, as times went, was a very good son to him.

And yet Mr. Gorhambury was one of those men who seem never to be cheered by a single ray of genuine happiness.

He appeared to live in a perpetual gloom. A dark shadow was ever upon his brow; his complexion was sallow, he grew thinner and thinner, his eyes were lustreless, his lips contracted, his temper morose and unsocial.

Mr. Gorhambury never had been an amiable man. Nobody liked him much. He was of a jealous, envious, discontented humour we know, always in secret comparing himself with those better off than himself, looking upon the superior advantages they enjoyed as a personal injury, and hungry and insatiable as a wolf, ready to devour anything that came in his way.

Miserable, wretched, thrice accursed temper—whence?

From some vicious misconstruction of the body which poisons all the genial streams of life, sending up its pestilential vapours to cloud the soul, from evil habits of thought

and feeling, contracted in infancy, under injudicious parents, or tyrannous servants, or brutal schoolmasters?

Whence—whence—

One hates this temper which can sympathize with no one's happiness, and does not know how to enjoy its own. One hates it so much, that one can scarcely even pity it; and yet, what a hell on earth the possession of it is?

It seems hardly possible to imagine a condition more utterly forlorn, than' such a one.

In Mr. Gorhambury's intense selfishness, he had been led from step to step, through a course of unnumbered and habitual meanesses, and petty wrong actions, springing from this accursed coveting of the world's wealth. He had been led, as we have seen, till he found himself, as people in the course of life sometimes most suddenly and unexpectedly do, upon the threshold of temptation, to commit a heavy crime.

Impunity flattered him, occasion favoured him, a certain fatal necessity seemed almost to excuse him.

Remember the day of small things.

In small things he had been habitually a sinner, in small things greedy, envious, unprincipled, unconscientious.

What he could not resist in little—was it possible he should resist in great? If the crime was greater, so was the temptation—the need more urgent, the desire more pressing.

He yielded, and from that day, adieu to the last faint gleam of happiness or peace.

Mr. Gorhambury was not altogether a hard, low, brutal, sinner; one of those who can enjoy a certain animal existence, when the life of the soul is fled.

He was not so bad, as, he was of an irritable temperament; he had too much brain—say too much heart to be able to exist in comfort in this deplorable state. He was a wretched man, and that is something to say for him.

No doubt too, the profession into which he, alas ! unworthily had entered, added very greatly to his wretchedness.

It is a dreadful thing to be a priest in God's temple, with a heart given up to the world ; to live in the presence of, and in the daily ministration of most holy things, with a darkened mind and sullied hands, and a heart craving after other bread—a bread which satisfieth not.

With so much leisure for discontented, ill-regulated thought—so much weariness over ill-executed duty, and all embittered by the secret comparison that will and must, be made, between the performance and the pattern !

I know no condition so deplorable as the union of a ghostly office and an earthly groveling mind ; nothing which so completely vitiates every feeling, turning all things to gall, or worse. Embittering, hardening, and defacing !

After Mr. Gorhambury's accession of fortune, it was observed that he almost entirely

abandoned his ministerial services. I have mentioned this before, and that it was the best sign he exhibited of something better still lingering about him. He was not so utterly abandoned of all feeling as to be able—carrying what he did written within—to come into the presence of his Creator, in those solemn offices.

For he was not, after all, entirely forsaken of all belief. Not so utterly abandoned as to have taken up his position with those, who, in the great controversy which Guizot says at present divides the world, deny God.

He was still among those who believe and tremble.

Obscurely, it is true—but he did believe—at least so far, that to mock God he dared not.

So he lived at Avon Castle very much retired, coming little to the town of G——, where alone he had any acquaintances he cared to cultivate, because he did not like to appear there; singular, when there, by abstaining from the performance of his professional

duties ; yet, as his family was constituted, finding little comfort at home.

Mrs. Gorhambury had never loved him. She had scarcely pretended to love him ; nay, rather, perhaps, took a certain pride in letting it be supposed that she had too much good taste ever to have been in love with such a man. She found abundance of amusement in carrying on her various pursuits, and her heart was filled with her son.

Philip had his own occupations and his own interests ; was not very much at home, and when there, little with his father, though respectful, good-natured, and complying when they met.

Altogether, scarcely could a monk of La Trappe, lead a more solitary and melancholy life than did Mr. Gorhambury.

Quite alone—ever alone—abandoned to his own dull, dark, unsatisfactory meditations.

He had been persuaded, however, to come to the Deanery upon this occasion, and in spite

of his habitual depression of spirits, he seemed pleased with the intended alliance. He appeared also, rather to enjoy the good things at the Dean's table, for the Dean kept, as we have said, a really excellent *recherché* table, whereas that of Mr. Gorhambury, in spite of his man cook, was often rather negligently served, as will be the case, when the lady of the house is too æsthetical, and the gentleman too atrabilious to look after such things.

This is rather a long digression, but Mr. Gorhambury must not be quite forgotten. One must just glance aside to see how it fared with the man, who had sacrificed so much to secure his object, and had so completely succeeded in attaining it.

"How well you look, Philip, this morning, bright as the morning itself; you must have been up with the lark; and where has that errant spirit of yours carried you, I wonder," began the mother, in her satisfaction and good spirits.

"It's a fine morning," said the Dean. "I



took two or three turns myself upon the terrace, but I did not see you there."

"No—I've been a roaming—a roaming," said Philip, colouring a little, and sitting down by Maria.

"The fair Maria is never *matinale*, I think."

"It is a new feature in the *beau Phillipe's* character," she answered. "I wonder what could take him out so early? I heard the glass-door shut at five this morning; is it possible that could be you?"

The colour heightened a little, he looked vexed, and said:

"I did not esteem myself so honoured as to have a spy upon my actions."

"Why I could not help hearing the door shut, you know; and you ought to be very much flattered that I trouble my head about you, and not look vexed as you do now. You grow crosser and crosser, I declare; I really shall insist upon knowing where you were, Sir," she said, lowering her tone; "for I

begin to be growing suspicious, ; you have such a conscious face. Now hasn't he, Mrs. Gorhambury? What can he have been about this morning?"

"Will you never have done," muttered Philip, angrily, and in a half-whisper, so that he could be distinctly heard only by herself. "What's the use of plaguing me, and turning the attention of the whole table upon me. Can't I take a six o'clock walk in the morning, but there must be all this to do?"

She was silenced—coloured, and turned away.

Then he began to be sensible how rudely and strangely he was behaving; besides, he caught the Dean's displeased eye fixed upon him, looking interrogatively, and at the same time as if dissatisfied.

His mother too, he felt rather than saw, was uncomfortable; he was ashamed of himself, and hastily endeavoured to make it up.

"Dear Maria! forgive me. You are the sweetest-tempered girl in the world. I am

ashamed to have tried you as I have too often done: forgive me, and do you wish to know where I have been, then?"

"Nay, I don't care," turning round with radiant smiles, "I only was trying to plague you a little, I believe. Have you been out in the fields?"

"Ye-es."

"Which way?"

"Oh! Parndon Birch way."

"And did you meet any one? and what did you see?" and then followed questions, such as those who have nothing to do, and little to think of, love to pour out in hopes of finding something from which they may obtain trifling excitement.

Which questions he parried in the best way he could, or answered by lying, without compunction, whenever he felt assured he could lie with impunity; for he who could practise deceit upon the scale he had suffered himself to do, was not likely to scruple backing it with a few, what he called *white lies*.

And so everybody was satisfied, and the morning passed pleasantly away, Philip devoting himself to Maria with more than common assiduity, as if he could thus make àmends, for what he had been doing, and what he was about to do ! for he had made up his mind, as soon as their ride should be over, and she had retired to her room, as she usually did, to rest for a couple of hours, to devote the time which was thus left at his disposal, and which he usually passed dawdling over the “Quarterly,” or strolling upon the terrace, or making sketches with pen and ink, for he was too idle to get out his colours and set regularly to work ; he had made up his mind to spend these two hours of liberty and leisure there, in the delightful and forbidden task of preparing the garden for that return, to which he looked forwards, with so much interest and emotion. To such inconsistency, to such wrong, was he alluring himself.

Down to the garden accordingly he went that afternoon, and the next morning, and the next

afternoon, and the next, and the next, filling up the intervals of time with Maria, as if he would compensate for his infidelity of heart by increasing his apparent attentions. He was more patient with her, less rude, less exacting. She felt happier and happier every day, and the whole family circle seemed contented, little dreaming of what was going on. And in this condition things remain.

And week succeeded to week, but still the wanderers did not return, and no tidings whatever were heard of them. The garden round the parsonage was arranged in perfect order, but the little plot he had taken under his own especial care was a masterpiece. It was as beautiful as the choicest flowers, in the greatest abundance, could make such a spot.

Every one knows how easy it is, at such a time of the year, to produce a sudden effect, as by enchantment, and to make an Eden, blossoming like the rose.

He had also sent in some additional furniture to the house, greatly to the surprise of Betty,

who could not imagine how the circumstances of Mr. Lovel were so much improved ; but she was very well pleased to arrange the luxurious couch for her master, and to put up the very pretty furniture, which she was told was intended for Miss Hernana's room.

It may seem strange that all this could be done without exciting attention at the Deanery ; but it must be recollected that Mr. Lovel's parsonage lay at another point, and in an obscure corner of this considerable town, a region quite out of the way of the walks and drives of its more aristocratical inhabitants ; and that nobody but himself was aware that the Lovels were expected home, for his father had lately resigned the living to another clergyman, and took no further interest about it.

Moreover, though Hernana and Maria were in a manner friends, no correspondence had taken place between them during this long absence, so that they had almost dropped out of each other's recollection.

Thus Philip was able to follow out his fancy

in this imprudent manner, and to escape detection ; not the slightest suspicion of what was going on, reaching any one of the party at the Deanery.

In the meantime, if flowers were being planted, and 'preparations made in a certain obscure house and garden, not the less were they going on elsewhere.

A house had been taken, about midway between the city of G—— and Avon Castle, for the young couple ; and Philip, whilst engaged in surreptitiously providing comforts for the woman he loved, had the particular pleasure of being incessantly consulted as regarded the furniture and apartments, preparing, in so much luxury and abundance, for the one he did not love.

He seemed to give a half careless, half vexed attention to the subject, and would dismiss the matters in question with a sort of anything-will-do manner, creditable to his philosophy, or significant of his indifference, as people chose to take it. Everybody chose to take it in the

more favourable light, and though they could have wished he would have taken a little more pleasure in what interested them all so much, yet they were content to put the best interpretation upon his behaviour.

The trinkets too came down—those trinkets that his mother had designed with so much taste, and which she now regarded with all an artist's pride and pleasure.

He had the heart to present them, and to see them received with sparkling eyes and blushes of intense pleasure, which he, evil-eyed as he was, attributed to a silly value for such trifles, despising her in his heart for it, and contrasting her to her disadvantage with another.

As men most cruelly and wilfully are apt to do in such cases, who not content with the wrong and the treachery of which they are guilty, suffer themselves to be constantly instituting comparisons, and that not only between one woman and another, but between the real, actual, living woman, with all her little infirmities and frailties, and the ideal they carry



in their own bosoms ; a comparison which not even the most faultless could stand.

And so day rolled over day, and Philip became more and more restless and uneasy, looking forwards with horror to his approaching wedding-day, yet too weak and irresolute to break it off ; cherishing a sort of hope that Hernana would return, and that her return would produce some violent crisis, which would break the entanglement in which he found himself involved, and set him at liberty without effort of his own.

But she comes not—she comes not !

No ! you must do it yourself ; you must emancipate yourself ; you must be courageous, candid, and sincere. No one can, or will, do it for you.

Cowardly, unmanly dissembler ! your task shall not be done for you. That stronger character upon which you love to lean, that brave, truthful, generous creature, who inspired you with truth, courage and generosity, is no longer there to supply you with moral strength, to make you

faithful to your own heart, and sincere to the heart you have so deeply injured.

Think it not.

A few days, and your wedding is to be celebrated, and you still go on—on—on yielding yourself to what you please to think a fatal necessity; to what you please to call your destiny; half undecided still! not having, even yet, quite made up your mind whether after all it is not the best thing you can do, like other weak characters, yielding yourself up under this sophistry to what you in your conscience know and feel is *not* for the best.

If she would but return! Something would happen to set all right—why will she not come back?—what detains her?—what a cursed fate pursues him, that she comes not back?

Oh!

But I hear the jingling sound of a post-chaise, don't I?

Yes!

And in it are two travellers—

A man worn with sickness, and a tall, thin

girl; worn, but not weakened, by toil and travel.

And the carriage stops at the iron gate of the old parsonage.

## CHAPTER VII.

MANY a weary day and hour, many a wearisome tedious month ; two entire years of sorrow, anxiety, and toil, had that fine creature passed through since she had left England with her father.

She quitted it, as we know, with her heart ill at ease, her anxieties and cares, embittered by that recollection of days past and gone, which ought to have proved a cordial to have sweetened all, but was now her heaviest burden. His inconsistent and unkind conduct ; the recollection of those moments when it was impossible to doubt

of his attachment, combined with his cruel desertion, produced those alternations of hope and fear, of doubt and certainty, ending at last in the acutest form of pain and sorrow, the human heart is called upon to bear.

Cruel, cruel infliction ! deep, unutterable suffering, to which so many men, unheeding what they do, expose so many women by their want of constancy of heart, and stability of purpose ; and that honourable principle which forbids the expression of infectious tenderness, stealing away the trusting woman's heart, till fixity of purpose is there.

Never was victim less deserving her fate, than this victim of inconstancy had been.

Her's was no weak, excitable, romantic temper, easily led to spin a serious love story upon a few soft words, too readily surrendering her affections at the first summons.

Everything that man can do, short of that declaration which seals his fate, Philip Gorham-bury had done, and done seriously.

It was here, as it has been in many another

equally lamentable case, the man was no dissembler—the passion he allowed himself to show was sincere at the moment—it was fidelity, constancy, honourable resolution which were wanting, not genuine love. Philip had felt as warmly as she believed he did.

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It had been a trying, sorrowful journey. Her father's continued illness; the difficulty of providing funds for present needs; the cruel uncertainty for the future as regarded him, for of herself she thought little; the increasing melancholy of Lady Aylmer, as year rolled away after year, and yet no claimant appeared for the little glove, clouded everything.

And all fell heavily upon this moral heroine. With such things she could struggle bravely; difficulty, danger, privation, she could undergo, and her courage never fail; but, oh! the enervating effects of happiness once enjoyed! the yearning after happiness, just held, as it were,

beyond her grasp, yet ever tantalizing and in view; the intense longing after the presence of one, alas! so far away. Were it but one look! one word! The struggle with such feelings is, indeed, a hard thing.

But she had borne *that*, as she had borne all. Native courage, and that strength which was not her own strength, had carried her through; and she returned home, toil-worn, and thin, and pale of cheek, it is true, like one who has been desperately struggling with pain and difficulty; but the bright lustre of her eye still unimpaired, for the light of the invincible spirit was shining there, and her health uninjured. Patience and fortitude, and, above all, resignation to the Great Will—more wise than her will—added to strenuous exertion for the sake of others, had carried her through it all, and she had been spared frightful evils incident to derangement of the nerves, when the struggle is too hard for the character.

Mr. Lovel's leave of absence had expired, and it had become necessary, if he did not

intend altogether to give up his curacy, that he should return home. Now, to return home was what Hernana dreaded above all things. Whilst living in different scenes, surrounded by new objects, and the too tender recollections of the past unawakened by association, she found she was able to get along pretty well; but she very much dreaded the returning to G——, and exposing herself to all that pre-occupation, nervous harassing, and alternation of thought and feelings, which renewed propinquity with Philip Gorhambury was sure to occasion.

The future seemed to her to present nothing but a scene of wretched perplexity. One way, alone, there was of solving all difficulty, and restoring her to that peace of mind, for which she had striven so courageously, and whilst abroad, attained, but which she now felt too sure must leave her; and this was the realisation of a hope, now almost abandoned, that Philip would, after all, prove true.

But this hope was faint indeed to compensate for other things. She was of an imaginative



temper, and her residence abroad had accustomed her to the enjoyment of the beautiful, and of elegances and comforts which in England seem reserved for the affluent alone. Her scanty resources she well knew would forbid any indulgences of this nature now. Daily bread was all she must expect; little or nothing to adorn life could be her portion.

This may seem a small grievance, but it seemed to throw a somewhat darker gloom upon the prospect; for Hernana was mortal, young, formed for enjoyment, and a woman.

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This day's journey has been more than usually melancholy. Her father felt worse, more low, helpless, and suffering, than usual; and Lady Aylmer was no longer with him, she having parted from them a few days before, proposing to return by a different route.

Hernana is very weary, too ; extremely tired with a long, shaking journey over bad roads, in a jingling hack-chaise ; and the future and the present alike seem covered with a black veil ; but she strives to conceal her sadness, and endeavours to cheer and amuse her father.

And in this temper, fighting with herself, and endeavouring vainly to raise her sinking spirits, she is driven through the well-known streets of this part of the town, which to her looks more gloomy and filthy, and more abounding with squalid and miserable figures, than ever ; until at last the chaise turns into the sort of open, neglected space, of which the wall of the parsonage garden forms one side, and stops in front of the iron gate.

One pleasant face at least there is to welcome the travellers home. Old Betty, with her honest countenance beaming with pleasure, is there. The welcome she gives is so warm and hearty as to be in itself a cordial. This cheered her a little ; and with

rising spirits she assists her father to descend from the chaise, and he placing his arm in hers, they enter the garden together.

Garden indeed ! It merited the name now.

The sun was bright, for it was a lovely afternoon, and shone upon all this profusion of gay colours and pleasant forms which surrounded her on every side.

Turfs rolled and watered green and smooth, a gravel walk neatly trimmed, and all around upon every side, beds of flowers, knots of flowers, pyramids of flowers, and all framed in a wall of green plantations.

The grey peaked roofs of the old parsonage house, presented themselves, looking venerable but cheery, like bright old age, from amid the bowers of jessamine, clematis, and fruit trees, that were trained all about and round the old casement windows, glittering like diamonds in the sun !

It really was a beautiful scene. Picturesque, and with a certain wildness, yet rich in colour,

and ordered with symmetry, such as a garden should be.

She looked round, she could scarcely believe her eyes! It was as if she was in a dream.

“Child! child! what hast thou been doing?” was all that Mr. Lovel could say.

And this recalled her to herself; and she began to tremble in her heart, and to look at old Betty, and to fear her orders had been misunderstood, and that this charming scene would prove but the prelude to new money embarrassments. She looked at the old woman and said:

“Betty! Dear good Betty! I am afraid you sadly misunderstood my orders. What *have* you been doing?”

“Why, bless your heart! You don’t think as how it’s *I*, as has been doing all them things?” said Betty, grinning with delight.

But it is a short way along that gravel walk; and now, they are at the house door, and through the pretty antique porch, and in the little lobby, and in the little parlour, all swept

and garnished, and neatly painted and papered ; and among the old chairs and tables, not one of which had been removed, stands a luxurious couch, suited for an invalid, and the prettiest chair and work-table that ever was seen or occupied by an industrious young lady.

She could not speak for surprise.

Sensations most overpowering were coming over her, as Betty, proud and happy, in a nice new dress, which she had put on that evening for the first time, thus proceeded :

“It’s all of a piece!—all of a piece ; and I do hopes as how you like it.

“My dear woman,” began Mr. Lovel, now becoming seriously uneasy, “you must have been mad ! Who is to pay for all these fine things ?”

“Why them as sent ’em in, to be sure ; and that’s not me, you may rest certain. And neither need you bother yourself anyhow about it ; for him as sent ’em in has a good right to do so, or I’m mistaken—as good a right, as a son as is to be, has to take care of a

father as is to be. And you need not go for to guess who that same may be; I see by Miss Hernana's eyes *she* needn't, at least; for it's neither more nor less than Mr. Philip Gorhambury, who used to be so sweet upon her, afore she went away."

She had guessed the truth, as old Betty said; but this sudden confirmation sent her to the window—and there she stood, and lifted up her eyes to Heaven, in one short, fervent thanksgiving of inexpressible joy.

I know no feeling like it—when one who has long suffered, and must know that the suffering has not, in one sense at least, been deserved; who may perhaps have found it sometimes hard to reconcile with their faith in the justice and mercy of God, this severe discipline of confirmed pain—suddenly feel themselves repaid, and bathed in a torrent of unexpected joy! of happiness, such as, even in fancy, they had not dared to imagine! and now it is realised, and their own!

The swelling of the heart—the expansion

upwards—the deep immeasurable gratitude! She had taught herself to believe him inconstant and unkind, to command herself to forget him, and with him, to abandon all that life offered of happiness; and she finds him here, occupied with her enjoyments, with her father's comforts, entering into, the most trifling detail; for everything around her only offered fresh proofs of his watchful love and care.

She stood at the window, the casement of which was open, and her eyes were lifted in one brief, rapturous ejaculation of thankfulness. And he—where was he? Why, standing at that very iron gate, looking in upon, and watching her.

He had seen her get out of the chaise—oh! with what a beating heart—had followed her with his eyes up the little walk, and had divined the rest. And now he was gazing at her, as there she stood; the splendour of her beauty, it is true, dimmed and faded—but still with that look! which had ever

been, to his fond eyes, more precious than it all !

He could resist no longer. He flung open the wicket, crossed the garden in three strides, and entering the house, presented himself there, standing in the parlour doorway.

Mr. Lovel uttered a faint exclamation of surprise, upon which she turned, and they were in each other's arms.

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There was need of no further declaration.

The whole was told. Yet, what was there to tell ? It was but the confession of what had upon both sides so long been understood.

He clasped her to his bosom with intense feeling, and she laid her head against his breast and wept.

Yes, those tears ! blessed, blessed sweet tears—how long ! how wearily long since she had shed such tears ! She had denied herself the relief of tears in her sorrow. Now they burst



forth like waters through a broken barrier, in one overwhelming flood of joy.

So they stood together in that little room—he clasping her to his breast, whispering inarticulate words of endearment. She, weeping—weeping as if dissolved in tears.

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But it was not very long that they indulged their feelings thus. Mr. Lovel required attention, and must be put to rest after his long journey, and rapture must abate and give way to the urgency of duty.

He assisted as of old to carry her father up stairs ; and then when he saw her occupied in the necessary business of unpacking his clothes, and preparing the bed, he recollected that it was time for him to go away.

So exchanging the holy kiss of affianced lovers, though not one syllable, but his few incoherent ejaculations had escaped him, they parted.

He went forth through the little gate in a state of insane joy, that approached to madness. She busied herself about her father's comforts with all that is exquisite in woman's feelings, nestling in her heart.

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What an hour of rapture followed, when duty done, she was left alone.

When silently she stood at the casement window of the little parlour, and looked up into the measureless, spangled depths, feeling as if her soul must penetrate the infinite, and carry its humble incense of gratitude to him who had given her a heart capable of such joy, of such measureless joy !

She found it impossible to rest.

Sometimes she walked up and down the little room, on every side of which the hand of his love was visible ; then she strolled about the garden, and never wearied of gazing upon the flowers he had planted, now with bended

heads and closed leaves shining so sweetly in the moonbeams.

She could have stooped down and kissed every tiny petal. She could have been capable of any extravagance in the infinity of her rapture, yet she played none of these fond foolish freaks. The whole was so real, so weighty ! Glad, sober certainty !

Well, well, let us leave her.

Let us leave her happy — happy beyond expression ! almost wishing that it had pleased Heaven so to take her ; and that when her lover returned in the morning, he might have found her dead.

But not so.

Not so, are we to be dismissed. Not till the task, the heavy task is finished ! The part played out.

Not to enjoy, but to suffer, are the martyrs sent here.

Brief is happiness—sorrow weary and long.

Such spirits have not their resting-place here ! What should they do in such a world

as this? A world of deception, inconstancy  
and wrong ! Go away, go away, poor Hernana !  
Take your flight before the morrow comes.

Not so. You must abide your fate.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THEY dined at the Deanery at half-past six o'clock, punctually. It was the rule and fashion of the house to be punctual as the clock, which never went wrong in this well-ordered family. The Dean loved arrangement and punctuality—there was a gravity, dignity, and propriety in it, which well became the man and the station he occupied.

The party had assembled in the dining-room, as the custom was, about ten minutes before the second bell rang, and everybody was in their places except one.

Philip Gorhambury did not appear.

“What can make Philip so late?” Mrs. Gorhambury kept repeating, vexed at this want of good manners; and surprised also, for her son was not one wantonly to commit a breach of respect of this sort, to any one, far less to one he honoured as he did the Dean.

“Will you excuse me?” she at last said, as she saw the finger upon the dial of the chimney clock, rapidly approaching the figure marking the half hour. “I think I will step up to Philip; something must be the matter, or he would never be so rude, and ill-bred.”

She accordingly left the room, and went up to her son’s apartment. It was empty.

His servant had laid out the dress for that evening; everything was prepared and in exact order, but the cage was empty.

Mrs. Gorhambury rang the bell.

“Jervis,” as the most fine and fashionable of valets appeared. “What is become of your master?”

“He has not come in, Madam.”

“I know he has not come in—you need not inform me of that,” said Mrs. Gorchambury, impatiently, “but can you tell me anything about him? why he has not come in? So late as it is! and where he can be?”

“I beg your pardon, Madam; how should I be likely to know?”

“Likely or not likely, I am convinced, by your manner, that you *do* know, and I desire to be made acquainted, immediately, with all you are able to tell.”

“Indeed, Madam, I have not the remotest reason upon earth to know where Mr. Philip is, I assure you so upon my word, Madam.”

“You may have no reason to know, but you *do* know, and I desire you will inform me.”

“I beg your pardon, Madam; but, really, this is something hard upon a man. How should I be acquainted with Mr. Philip Gor-

hambury's proceedings? which, to confess the truth, are often so eccentric as to defy calculation."

"Eccentric! are they? I was not aware of that circumstance. How eccentric? I expect you to explain yourself, Jervis, and to do it without delay, or attempt at disguise. How are your master's movements eccentric? and what do you know of their eccentricity?"

"Indeed, Madam, you puzzle me greatly. I beg your pardon, but in my opinion, humbly taking leave to express so much before you, Madam; men are upon honour in cases like these, and it does not become one young man to betray another. We are all fallible."

"Was there ever such a puppy?" thought Mrs. Gorhambury, angrily; but the coxcombry of the valet, and the tone it pleased that supremely fine gentleman to take, reminded her of her own dignity; she checked the voice of anger with which she was about to speak, and said coldly:

"I am not accustomed to have my orders



disputed by servants. I repeat it: I desire to know, and that instantly, everything with which you may be acquainted, that can explain my son's absence at such an hour as this. What did you mean, by calling your master's movements eccentric?"

Mrs. Gorhambury was well known to be a woman of resolution, and the valet understood that her word was law in her own family, and her son would certainly discharge him upon the instant if pressed to do it by his mother; so, assuming an air of profound respect, to which he endeavoured to give colour of melancholy regret, he said:

"Eccentric, Madam, perhaps, I ought not to say; for most young men, I fear, are open to severe reproaches of this present nature. I am afraid if Mrs. Gorhambury were to ask her son how he employed the hours between six and eight, which he steals from sleep every morning, she would not get a very satisfactory answer. Not that I apprehend any very

serious misconduct upon the part of Mr. Philip—but there is a mystery about the affair—and it is seldom that what a man can altogether justify, he hides under a mystery.”

“Explain yourself at once! Speak out!”

“I hope I may be excused, indeed, Madam.”

“Do you forget altogether what you are, and in what relation you stand to me, that you dare thus insolently to disobey my commands?” cried Mrs. Gorhambury, losing all patience at last. “Speak out! How has my son been passing those two hours you mention? I did not even know he was accustomed to leave his room!”

“Innocently, Madam! innocently, I would pledge my word; but yet in a manner to make his best friends uneasy. In short, in gardening.”

“Gardening! What *can* you mean? Gardening! What signification can such an innocent way of employing his morning hours as that have? though I confess it is a humour

which I had not suspected him of. But any exercise of fancy is natural to his mind."

"The significance of the matter, Madam, if I may take leave to say so, lies in the place where a man gardens."

"The place where he gardens ! Where, but here ?"

"Anywhere but here."

"Speak out ! speak out ! What terrible, terrible thing do you presume to insinuate ? Garden ! where ? Tell me at once, where ?"

"The old Parsonage-house, Mrs. Gorham-bury may perhaps remember, has a pretty large garden. It had got very much out of order whilst poor Mr. Lovel was absent ; and indeed, too, I had the curiosity one day to walk in that direction, merely to look about me and at the old place, of which I had heard a good deal of talk since I had the honour to enter Mr. Philip's service. The garden was sadly out of order ; and perhaps it was mere good nature upon the part of Mr. Philip, which led him, so soon as it was known that the family were

coming home, to give directions to have it all put to rights, and planted with the most beautiful and expensive shrubs, flowers, &c., that could be found; and, indeed, to take a spade himself now and then."

All the blood in Mrs. Gorhambury's veins seemed suddenly to freeze at this intelligence. She turned very pale, and was going to speak again, when the last dinner-bell rang. Go down she must, and make what apologies she could invent. She turned hastily to the dressing table, swallowed a tumbler of water, and saying, "Let me know as soon as your master comes in," hastened down stairs.

Her countenance was so disturbed, so *bouleversée*, as the French say, when she entered the room, that everybody was struck by it.

"Nothing seriously the matter, I hope," said the Dean, as he rose to give his arm and conduct her into the dining-room.

"Oh, nothing! nothing! Only I am vexed to have kept you all waiting. Philip had, I recollect, some business in the town, which probably

has delayed him. He is not usually unpunctual; so I trust to your indulgence to forgive this breach of rules, and to allow him to have a little dinner in the library when he comes back."

And so she got through it as well as she could; but it was impossible for her so completely to disguise her uneasiness as to escape observation. The Dean looked grave; Lady Maria curious; Maria half-vexed, half-grieved. Mr. Gorhambury, alone unmoved, ate his dinner in silence, as usual.

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It was nine o'clock before Philip Gorhambury returned. He entered by the back door, spoke to no one; but going hastily up the servants' stairs, made his way to his own room. He found his mother there, waiting for him.

He came in, his face flushed, his hair in disorder, his eyes passionate and bloodshot. Worried, feverish, excited, thus he burst into

the room, making as if he would lock himself in; when, behold! his mother sitting there by the window, waiting for him. He stood as if turned to stone before her, neither advancing nor endeavouring to retreat.

“Philip!” she said, with grave solemnity, and in a voice which Siddons might have used upon such an occasion: “what am I to think of this strange behaviour?”

Her voice seemed to dissolve the first intensity of dismay, which had as it were almost turned him to marble; and approaching her, he said, indignantly:

“Mother! why do I find you here? Watching? spying?”

“Why do you find me here? Because I am your mother; and it is my post and my duty to watch—to spy, if you must have it so—when I am agitated with the utmost astonishment and distress by what I have, too late, learned. I fear my son is forgetting that he is, or ought to be, a man of honour!”

“Honour! honour! honour!” he cried,

somewhat wildly. "Forgetting! True! too true! But when, when did that forgetting begin?"

"I know not when it *begun*—it is enough that the breach exists, or, rather, has existed—for I trust at my remonstrance, Philip, there will be an end put at once to the romantic, and worse than romantic nonsense, in which, I fear, you have been indulging."

"Oh! oh!" he cried "an end!—yes—yes—yes! There will be an end," and he gathered and crushed himself together as a man does in the anticipation of some ecstatic joy.

His mother stared at him for some moments—what did he mean? what could he mean by those incoherent ejaculations?

Philip you are an enigma to me," at last she said, coldly; "but I am not going to be equally incomprehensible to you. To speak plainly, I have heard of the way you have been spending two hours every morning, when all the world thought you were in your bed; and of the absurd and romantic fancy for putting that large, ram-

bling garden at the old house into apple-pie order—I do not mean to quarrel with you for this way of spending your money, or that way of spending your money, your father allows you enough to justify any extravagance or folly—but I *do* wonder—circumstances being as they are, and circumstances having been as they have been—that you had not the common prudence and delicacy to refrain from indulging a whim—at any other time innocent enough—and I insist upon it, and exact it as a proof of your duty and obedience, that henceforward there is an end made to this nonsense; and that you give me your word of honour never to go near that odious Parsonage, and its garden again.”

He had stood there bolt upright before her whilst she made this speech, moving neither limb nor feature—at its conclusion a bitter smile passed over his lips as he said :

“And you think I shall give you this promise?”

“I *do* think you will give it me, for I exact



it upon your duty as a son. Philip! what strange demon possesses you?"

"Ay, that's the word. You've hit it at last. A demon! Yes, a strange demon—a possession! yes, a possession; but one, not all the powers in heaven or hell can cast out. You, perhaps, see a madman before you, mother. I don't know well whether I am mad, or dreaming, or awake; but this I do know, that the maniac in the Scripture was not stronger than I to rend his fetters, and thus I tear my bonds asunder," making a motion as if rending himself free. "Mother, I love Hernana Lovel. I have pledged my faith to her this night, mother! Her tears are still upon my bosom. She loves me! and we are bound for ever."

She started up from her chair with a kindling eye and a gesture of rage, as if she would have flown at him as he uttered the hated name.

"Say that again! say that again!" she cried, "dare to say that again—and if—if—if—Oh! do not make me curse you."

"I do say it again—I dare say it again—I

love Hernana Lovel," he almost shouted in wild defiance. "Ever have—ever shall—ever will. Oh, my angel!—my angel!—my angel!—that you should love such a wretch as I."

She flew upon his arm; she grasped it almost as a she tiger-cat might have done; her rage rendered her speechless. She shook the arm with violence, as if to stop these exclamations, which he continued to pour forth, as if in bitter sport, to exasperate her to madness.

"You think, perhaps, I dare not avow it. That weak, selfish, interested, as I have been—traitor to love, to my own heart, to her; suffering myself to be influenced by motives, to be led by suggestions, equally mean and contemptible!—that I am a cowardly, as well as a weak and selfish wretch, and that I dare not avow it. I tell you, no—mother!—mother! be quiet. Why do you look in that way? Why do you hold my arm so fiercely? Be quiet!—be quiet, mother. Have you not done harm enough? Have you not led me to commit meanness enough? Will you persist?

Would you, if you could, keep me as you have made me, a traitor to my own heart and to her? Mother—mother—let me go.”

She did so, and sank breathless back upon her chair. Speechless still, but her eyes glaring upon him with a rage and agony indescribable. She gasped several times, at last she sighed deeply, and recovering breath and voice, she said in a hollow tone :

“ Who is it talking to me of honour ?”

“ I am, mother—of my love.”

“ Your *love* !”

“ And of my honour.”

“ Your *honour* !”

“ Yes, of what I owe to my first love ; my old unstained honour. Oh, cursed be this house, and cursed be the hour I entered it,” he said, gnashing his teeth and looking round with a ghastly expression of rage and hatred, “ for here I was betrayed into being a traitor to both, and cursed !—”

“ Spare your curses, Sir,” said Mrs. Gorhambury, “ and spare your accusations if you

please. Betrayed ! By whom were you betrayed ? What force was put upon your inclinations ? What fetters imposed upon your will ? Were you not free to choose—to take or to leave ? Who betrayed you but yourself, I should be glad to know ?”

“ You did—my mother did. Can you deny it ? Did you leave any means untried to influence me ?

“ And if I did ! pray was I to be debarred the exercise of my judgment ? Was I to be denied the liberty of performing what I thought a sacred duty ? Most true ! I did deprecate, and I *do* deprecate this romantic flinging away of yourself and all your prospects in life to dedicate it to the fond foolish idolatry of a common-place, half-educated girl ! a mere whim that took its rise among the accidents of childhood. True, I *did* do my best to persuade you to an honourable rational alliance, in which I was confident you would find respectability and happiness. True, I did make what efforts I could ; but whose fault is it, pray, if those

efforts succeeded? Why did they succeed? But because all I said and urged found a response within; and your own heart told you, when I pointed it out, that there lay your true well-being. If you had made such a mighty fuss about your heart then, as you are pleased to be making to-night, believe me I would never have asked you to pay your addresses to Maria Westmore, because I should have thought you unworthy of her."

His head sank upon his breast during this speech. When his mother ceased, which she did with an accent of bitter contempt, he remained silent for a considerable time, whilst she sat watching him. Gradually the clouds of shame and self-reproach cleared away from his countenance. He raised his head—his face had<sup>e</sup> recovered something of its wonted expression, as he said :

"I have been to blame; but you, mother, are the last who ought to reproach me. For through my whole life have you not been instilling one or other of these worldly-wise

maxims into my mind. I was too worldly-wise, I confess it ; but here, I abjure such baseness for ever. I will live to mine own heart. I love Hernana Lovel, and Hernana Lovel I intend to make my wife."

Again she started up with a passionate gesture, then she checked herself, and sat down again.

"Doubtless the merits of the young lady afford sufficient excuse for a resolution such as this, compounded of folly and treachery."

"If I thought there were either folly or treachery in it, do you suppose for a moment I would make it?"

"Oh, no ! I beg your pardon ; I thought there was something that looked very like both, in such conduct upon the part of a gentleman who was on the eve of marriage to another young lady. A match, most unexceptionable in every way, with a girl whose position in life, birth, beauty, and temper, had left her friends to suppose that she merited very different treatment in exchange for a heart that few

men would not have been proud to have won.”

“Heart! heart! aye, there it is. I never wanted her heart. I never asked for her heart—a school-girl’s heart! Given away because the pretty fools cannot live without their lovers. Mother, mother! I know the value well enough of a young lady’s first passion. It will do her no very great harm to have it disappointed—teach her a little of the world—teach her that women to be interesting, must be self-governed—not ready to throw themselves at the head of the first pretty fellow they can have a romance with. Mother, don’t talk in this way, if you would not have me hate Maria. It is this—this more than all that drives me from her. Mother, mother! be rational in your turn! can you not *see*—will you not *see* that I don’t like her—that she cannot please me—cannot interest me; and yet she is well enough—a good pretty girl! but oh! how unlike—”

“And so you will very quietly go and ruin the prospects, and break the heart of the

woman you had engaged yourself to marry next week—next Thursday, if I recollect right. Am I to go down and tell the Dean this?”

“Tell him anything. Say what you will. Dear, good mother! make the best of it you can.”

“I, make the best of it!—I go down and tell this disgraceful tale! Oh no, Sir. Go down and tell it yourself, if told it must be.”

The fervour of his feelings had in some degree calmed during this mortifying conversation; but his resolution had not in the least abated.

“I see,” he said, with sadness. “I see I have behaved extremely ill. I am unjust and barbarous to Maria; this is indeed a base return to make for the poor girl’s affection, for I really believe she loves me. But what can I do? Is it my fault that my heart absolutely refuses to love in return? Is it my fault that there is another—oh, that other!—unparalleled, who loves me too. Yes, mother, and who has loved me through sorrow and toil, ever since



she was a child, and I a child. Is not this a more sacred affection? Must I sacrifice a being like that to a poor foolish little thing, who will love some other just as well in a twelvemonth, depend upon it. No, my resolution is not to be shaken. How best to get out of this difficulty, I know not, and I see you have not the kindness to help me; but do not flatter yourself that you will be able to persuade me to that, which I now feel to be equally base and impossible."

Mrs. Gorhambury had grown calmer as well as her son. She considered a little before she spoke again.

"What do you intend to do to-night, then? Come down and show your face in the drawing-room?—your hangman's face, I could almost call it."

"Mother, mother! no. I do *not* intend to show my hangman's face in the drawing-room to-night. Say I have a bad head-ache. Excuse me as you can; I shall go to bed."

"And to-morrow!"

“Oh! to-morrow shall be a day of restitution. We will all be put into our right places to-morrow.”

“Be it so,” said Mrs. Gorhambury, with a strange smile. “I conclude you will have too much regard for Miss Lovel’s reputation to visit her to-morrow; really, Philip, if you have no consideration for the poor young woman, I have.”

“Be under no apprehensions upon the *poor young woman’s* account, as you please to style her. I will take care of the honour and reputation of Hernana Lovel, rely upon that,” he said, with a proud offended air.

“Promise me one thing, at least.”

“I will promise nothing, except that all things shall be restored to their proper places to-morrow.”

## CHAPTER IX.

Ан ! that to-morrow it is come.

It came up a fresh, sweet, shining morning ; and the dew lay sparkling upon those flowers which he had planted, and the sun cast long shadows from the shrubs with which he had adorned the little spot.

She had passed a sleepless night, a sleepless night of happiness almost too great to be endured ; and she had risen early, for she yearned to be in that garden again—again gazing upon those proofs of his affection which surrounded her—those proofs of his tenderness, truth, and constancy.

She had softly opened her father's door, paying him, as was her custom, the first duty of the day. She found him still sleeping, and with a tranquillity that proved how happy he felt himself, to be restored to his home.

So she quietly closed the door again, and then slid down the stairs, opening the house-door with precaution, and stepped forth.

She had her light summer morning dress on, which had something of a foreign cut and air, and was particularly suited to her face and figure, and over her head she had drawn a large white muslin shawl, in the guise of a mantilla. Thus dressed, in spite of her worn and fatigued features, the paleness of her cheek, and the somewhat dimmed lustre of her eyes, she looked eminently beautiful, and of the finest character of beauty; indeed her appearance had greatly improved by the two years spent in foreign travel, and there was that look, we call distinguished about her, which so greatly enhances personal charms.

The air of the morning, so fresh and sweet,

called up a slight colour into her cheek; and that expression too was there—that look ineffable, which love—confiding, happy love—and that alone gives to a woman’s countenance. A charm one can scarcely define—one knows not well where, or in what it lies, but there is no charm like it.

She wandered about the garden—now here, now there, now bending over a rose-tree, one blush of blossoms, or examining the splendid geraniums and carnations in the little parterres; then she gathered a sprig of flowering myrtle—her favourite of all—for it reminded her of Nice and the Mediterranean; and was moreover, in her opinion, as in mine, the sweetest and most charming of flowers.

And thus she was engaged, when she heard the garden gate open, and as she turned round to see who could be coming at so early an hour, Philip Gorhambury entered.

The Cathedral clock was just then going seven.

He came up to her hastily, and with a

certain agitation and impatience in his manner ; yet there was joy upon his features, to find her there and alone, though his cheek was faded, his eye disturbed, and his voice hurried and faltering.

She did not take alarm at this, for him, unusually excited manner : she saw in it only a fresh proof of the influence of feelings so precious to her. And she met him with a confiding smile of affection, which she no longer endeavoured to disguise.

“My precious darling!” he began, “you are up early, after so long a journey. I wished, and yet I scarcely hoped to find you stirring.”

“I could not sleep very well last night, Philip!—you will not wonder at that. It was such an unexpected rush of joy—so sudden! For I had almost made up my mind, or rather, I had been long, long struggling to persuade my heart, that you had forgotten me; and that if I ever had been anything to you, you cared for me no longer. I had no

right, perhaps, to reproach you, for no pledge of mine did you hold; and yet my heart *would* reproach you Philip."

"You thought you had a claim upon me," he cried hastily. "You were right, you *had* a claim—a prior claim—a prior and indefeasible claim!"

"I never went so far as that; I thought you at perfect liberty to do as you pleased; and yet, I don't know whether that is quite the truth, neither—but all that is over now, let us think no more of it."

And he seemed also inclined to shut out the past, and would fain, like her, have thought no more of it—*that* was impossible; but he had at least the satisfaction of having made up his mind as to the future. He had abundance of courage and resolution; he knew there would be much that was most painful and disagreeable to be gone through, but he was prepared to go through with it, and once over, there would be an end to it for ever. Thus having made up his mind, he

yielded to the sweet influences of the present, and succeeded in dismissing painful reflections.

They walked up and down, and round and round the little secluded spot. Never weary, as lovers never are, and forgetful of time; and they had thus loitered away for about an hour—Hernana, in a state of felicity which defies description, and he, as happy—and a great deal more happy than he had any right to be—when again, the latch of the little iron gate was heard to move, and some one to enter the garden.

They had their backs to the entrance, and were slowly sauntering together, side by side, up the little gravel walk; but hearing the gate open, they both turned, and beheld Mrs. Gorhambury!

A feeling of inexpressible delight gladdened the eyes of Hernana.

His mother! Was it possible? His mother! come to greet her so early; how unexpected—how kind! She stepped for-



ward, her face all beaming with joy, to give welcome to Philip's mother.

But Philip turned pale, trembled, and stood still.

Mrs. Gorhambury advanced slowly up the path. She was a little heated, and out of breath, for she had walked all the way from the Deanery. Finding her son already gone out, she had immediately set forward to follow him, resolved, without further delay, to bring matters to a crisis.

The bright, loving, happy face with which Hernana came forward to greet her, might have made many another woman, if not falter in her purpose, at least regret its necessity ; but Mrs. Gorhambury's jaundiced eye only read an insolent exultation and triumph in this glow of purest joy and gratitude. Thus the very aspect which might have softened the heart of another, only served still more to incense hers. Rejecting the offered hand held out so gladly to welcome her, she coldly said :

"If you are at leisure, Miss Lovel, I would

beg a few moments' conversation with you. And you, young man, it would be well for you to be present."

Hernana was struck speechless with surprise at this unexpected reception. Her colour rose, and she looked at Philip for explanation; but he stood there, his face working with such strange and violent alternations of feeling, that a glance at it only added to her terror and perplexity.

"Nay, Sir," said Mrs. Gorhambury, answering to that expression of face, though Philip had as yet neither moved nor spoken "that enraged countenance ill becomes you. You know that I am only about to do that which, if there had been the slightest spark of honour left in your bosom, it never would have been left for me to do; namely, to explain to this young person here, your true situation."

Hernana, with a face from which all colour had by this time fled, could only stand there glancing in amazement from mother to son.

Something, something terrible, was at hand.

She could read that in the aspect of both. She was so terror-struck, so confounded, that at the moment she could do nothing but strive to summon up fortitude and self-command to meet the awful, yet incomprehensible blow, which she felt was impending.

She stood trembling with agitation, but struggling to gather up her courage.

“This garden,” Mrs. Gorhambury went on, looking round, and with a coolness which, to her son’s excited imagination, appeared almost satanic, “this garden is not a place for explanations. Is Mr. Lovel up? I should hope not. I should be sorry to disturb him. Can we go into the house, and have a few words of conversation by ourselves?”

“My father has not left his room, but the house is small, and strange voices might surprise him. There is the little summer-house, at the top of the garden,” faltered Hernana, “perhaps that might do.”

“Anywhere, so I can speak to you without being overheard. I shall not detain you long.

Philip ! Nay, do not steal away ; I want you to be present, when I open my business to Miss Lovel."

"Barbarous !" he cried. Then to Hernana : "Yes, let us go to the little summer-house, my love ; there will be a few excited moments to go through, best not risk disturbing your father. Yes, mother, I follow ; but, if you think to alter my resolution, by this or by any other proceeding you may please to adopt, you will find yourself mistaken."

"I do not expect to alter your resolution ; I do not care for your resolution. Miss Lovel"—they were now entering the summer-house—"Miss Lovel, I address myself to you, and to you alone. Sit down," seating herself as she spoke, "what I have to say is from no impulse of passion. I am not going to utter a few angry words of reproach and remonstrance. All I have to do is to ask a few plain questions, state a few plain facts, and Miss Lovel must draw her own inference as to what she ought to do."

Hernana seated herself in silence. Philip leaned gloomily against the wall.

Mrs. Gorhambury went on.

“The question I would ask is simply this. Did that young gentleman, or did he not, think proper to inform the young lady who has accepted from him, not only all these testimonies of regard that I see around me, but a declaration, if I mistake not, that, as she considers it, can lead to but one result? Did that young gentleman, or did he not, inform her, that he had, for the last six months, been paying his addresses to another woman; and that Thursday in next week, just five days from this, is appointed for his wedding day?”

She started up as if she had been shot.

Her eyes staring as if all sense had suddenly left them, glaring upon Philip, to whom she approached with stretched-out arms, as if she would have taken shelter on his bosom. She had evidently, for the moment, lost her senses.

“Mother! what have you done?” he cried

fiercely ; and he caught the poor bewildered creature in his arms, and clasped her to his breast, crying out : “ Hernana ! my Hernana ! recollect yourself—come to yourself again.”

She looked up in his face with those staring eyes, from which all reason had fled ; but as he kept pressing her to his breast, with the fondest caresses, the spasm on life and reason gradually melted away, and bursting into tears as she stood there clasped in his arms, and her head supported on his shoulder, she looked up in his face and said :

“ What were they saying, my Philip ? ”

Mrs. Gorhambury was rising to speak, but her son made a gesture so imperious, commanding her to be silent, that it was impossible not to obey.

“ Never mind what they said, my love,” he whispered in his sweetest and fondest tone ; oh, that tone of bewitching fondness ! “ Rally your spirits, my love—come into the fresh air—come—”

Her recollection, however, was already re-

turning, and with it came the remembrance of that speech of Mrs. Gorhambury's, that had by its cruel suddenness, entirely upset her; and with it came that habitual fortitude, so often exercised before, in the course of a life of anxiety and sorrow, and which had been proof against everything, till now.

It was so completely the habit, of her temper, of her character, to rise up and resist suffering, that no sooner was she restored to her self-possession, after the dreadful shock she had received, then she attempted gently to release herself from the encircling arms of her lover; and looking up again into his eyes, with the most confiding expression, she said:

“I can bear to hear it now, for I am certain you will explain everything.” Then turning to Mrs. Gorhambury, still supported by Philip's arm round her waist, for she was indeed unable to stand alone, she said, “I think I could not have understood you rightly, Madam, for indeed it seems more like the terrible confusion

of a delirious dream, than anything else. I am sure, if Philip has anything to tell which ought to be told, it is only the suddenness of our meeting, that has prevented it. We, really, have had no time for explanations."

He stooped down as she said this, as if with an invincible impulse to kiss that head which was but a little raised from his shoulder ; but his mother, harshly, and with an almost passionate gesture of the hand, prevented him.

"How dare you!" darted from her angry eye.

Then putting her own arm round Miss Lovel's waist, with a determination not to be resisted, she released her from her son's embrace, and placing her upon one of the little garden-chairs, she said :

"I am shocked at the pain I have been obliged to give, and as you do not seem at present very well able to bear what I have further to say, perhaps this young man and I had better leave you, and I will come again in



the evening, when you are a little recovered, and tell you all which it is necessary you should know."

"I would rather hear it now," said Hernana, deadly pale, and endeavouring to keep down the nervous trembling and shivering that was creeping over her. "Don't keep me in suspense, if you please. If there is anything to be told against Philip, let me hear it at once."

"Told against him! Hernana—Miss Lovel, I mean; surely you have not already forgotten the facts with which I have just made you acquainted."

"No, not quite," confusedly; "I cannot understand — another! Some entanglement with another! What was it?"

"My poor girl," said Mrs. Gorhambury, almost touched herself by this scene, whilst Philip stood there, the picture of despair. "Entanglement, is but a mild word to express the cruel truth; that, in short, Philip has pledged himself to another."

“But pledged or not pledged!” he cried, coming hastily forward, “who never will be that other’s, engaged to be married, Thursday, Wednesday, Tuesday, this very hour—would break that engagement! Nay, would fling away the offered hand at the very altar! for one woman alone he loves, and one woman alone shall be his wife!”

And he threw himself upon his knees before Hernana, as he spoke, and endeavoured again to fling his arms round her. But she drew back.

“Did I hear you right, Philip?” she said, in a trembling voice, “or do my ears deceive me. There is such a confusion of ringing voices. I cannot—I cannot compose myself—but did I hear rightly, my Philip?”

“Yes! precious darling of my heart! though I steeped my soul in blackest perjury, I would do it, will do it, and more, if there could be more, would do for you!”

“Perjury! I don’t understand!”

“Philip! how can you—how can you keep

her in this cruel state of suspense? Oh! what a fool I was," mentally ejaculated Mrs. Gorhambury, "not to tell her all this alone! Rise, Sir, from your knees, where you know you have no right to be! Miss Lovel, summon your fortitude, for you *shall* know all; indeed, you *must*! This cruel, treacherous young man is engaged to another—has been engaged to her for six months—and he is only trifling with you."

"Trifling, mother!" cried Philip, starting up. "Hernana, hear me! hear me!"

"Hear you, Philip! Yes!" she said, making the most dreadful efforts to appear calm; "only tell me this is a mistake!—not true! Only tell me that! Oh! I will be so glad to hear you!"

"He cannot say it!" said Mrs. Gorhambury; "he knows he cannot!"

"Can you not, Philip? Speak to me, Philip!"

But Philip answered not to the appeal; all he could utter was:

“I am yours!—yours for life and death!—and what matters the rest?”

“Matters!—much!” she said, in a tone as if her heart were broken, it came forth so feeble and so hollow. “Is it so, really so, Mrs. Gorhambury? Is it really so, Philip?”

There was no answer.

She fell back in her chair, covered her eyes with her hands, and remained motionless a few moments. She was endeavouring to quiet her thoughts; and she was casting up one short, fervent prayer for strength, to the true fountain of real strength.

Mrs. Gorhambury and her son, stood in a sort of mute and almost reverential expectation, during this short time, waiting till Hernana should uncover her eyes, and speak again. Presently the hands dropped, and displayed a countenance rendered serene by self-victory, and the noble courage of endurance. There was a sort of glory in it.

Philip wild with love and admiration was rushing forwards to cast himself at her feet

again, and renew his passionate declarations, but she waved him back, with a melancholy firmness, and turning to Mrs. Gorhambury, said :

“I can bear to hear the whole truth now—if you will please to tell it me.”

And then Mrs. Gorhambury proceeded, though with some difficulty, to relate what had happened, and the position in which Philip stood—describing the attachment of Maria, the solemn pledges which he had given, and ending by an appeal that was both eloquent and affecting, beseeching Miss Lovel to do that for him, which he was too unprincipled to do for himself, and save his honour and her own.

The narration was only interrupted by a few sighs, that were almost sobs, upon the part of the listener, for Philip stood by perfectly still, as if resolved neither to move nor speak. These sobs kept now and then breaking through the course of Mrs. Gorhambury's narration in a strange pathetic manner; but it was evident

the greatest effort was being made to repress them. When Mrs. Gorhambury had ended, there was again a brief pause.

It seemed as if Hernana was preparing to speak, and endeavouring to do it with calmness and deliberation. Once she glanced at Philip, and a wild pang of love and passion seemed almost to distort her countenance; but it was subdued by a strong effort, and she did not look at him again.

“Mrs. Gorhambury,” she said, “I thank you for telling me what you have done, and so speedily; for you know what I ought to do, and the sooner it is all over the better—the less pain—the—you are quite right; there can be but one thing to be done, we must not meet again—Philip and I.—Farewell, Philip!”

He stood there looking wistfully at her, but said nothing, till she rose from her seat to go away; her steps were tottering: he rushed forwards to support her.

“No—no,” she said: “it must not be!”

“What must not be? Am I in my senses? Are you in yours? What must not be? One thing I know,” he cried, bursting out violently, “must not be, that I and you should be parted—that must not, and shall never—never be!”

“Rash boy!” cried his mother: “what are you saying? Is no obligation sacred in your eyes? Would you really persist in this vain attempt to betray two women who have trusted you?”

“Never mind her—never mind her, Hernana; think only of yourself and me—of the duty we owe to each other. You will—you must!”

“No, Philip,” she said, stopping and turning her pale face round to him, the features fixed as if in marble, the eyes only appearing alive, and they were gleaming with resolution. “No, Philip, here we part. Do not persist, it

is in vain : there is no alternative. Do what is right—your duty—and leave me to mine. We must not break Maria Westmore's heart. Let me go, pray, Philip ! I don't feel quite—quite well ! Mrs. Gorhambury, pray ask him to let me go ; for nothing—nothing, Philip, can alter what is the truth, and we are parted for ever.”

“ Go then,” he said, releasing her ; “ if you can part with me so easily, I am sure I cannot have the slightest wish to detain you.”

She glanced up at him—full in the face, with a look that said :

“ Is this you ?”

Then in her humble, pious heart, she ejaculated her thanks. The task was rendered easier, was rendered possible. He was more angry and less miserable. She could bear his anger, his injustice, his indifference, anything better than his misery. Oh ! not his misery.

She did not look again at either mother or



son, but made the best of her way to the house. When there, she sent a message by the only servant, to her father, to say that she was not very well, perhaps over tired and had got up too early, and walked too long before breakfast, that she was gone into her own room to lie down for an hour, and would then come to him. And so she went patiently and quietly with her half-broken heart, into her room, and shut her door, and drew the curtains of her little window, and the curtains of her bed; and shutting out the light of day, laid herself down not to be miserable, but to struggle with her misery, with her own passions, with her own rebellious beating heart, and to submit.

“Where thou leadest, there let me go; let thy choice be my choice; shall I not take up my appointed cross; shall I mourn, because this happiness is denied?”

Such was the course of her thoughts, incoherent and confused, at present, but gradually subsiding into their usual calm endurance, and

habitual self-sacrifice. She had been so long accustomed to suffer, that it seemed but returning to the usual course of life to have to suffer on.

## CHAPTER X.

IT was the Thursday afterwards, the very next Thursday, that the bells were ringing merrily for Miss Westmore's wedding, which took place upon that day, as appointed. A more glorious morning never shone upon a marriage, if that could have been a good omen, where no omens could give promise of happiness. Still there were all the usual attendants upon, and harbingers of future felicity, a gay group of merry bridesmaids, a very pretty bride, whose face beamed with felicity, a very handsome bridegroom, who if he did

look a little pale and nervous, went through the ceremony in a most interesting manner. A very elaborate breakfast; Champagne undeniably of the first class; speeches, congratulations, a beautiful carriage, four horses, man and maid behind; tears whilst in her mother's and father's arms, and a sunshine, which might have made a rainbow behind the little cloud. He puts her into the carriage, steps in after her, and they are off. Mrs. Gorhambury heaves a deep sigh, and turns into the dining-room, satisfied that one of the best days work of her life is concluded; and Mr. Gorhambury looks, perhaps, a thought less gloomy and uncomfortable than usual, as he stands at the window talking with the Dean, whose face yet bears the traces of recent emotion. For the Dean loved his daughter much, and he had given her away. He had bestowed her well, but still she was gone; he had given her away to another. Lady Maria took this as she took all things, very quietly

Hernana sat in the little parlour by the side of

the sofa; *his* gift, upon which her father lay dozing. She had her needle work in her hand, for she knew by long experience the tranquillising effect of that little homely employment. Some one, once said to her, "I know you are suffering, for you are sewing." In happier hours, she had usually something more important to be busy about.

And as she sewed, the merry bells came sounding in through the open casement, and the sweet smell of the flowers, and the bright sunshine, and the noise of birds, whispering and chattering in the creepers with which the house was covered; and the gentle wind, that there was, waving among the branches of the shrubs in the garden!

And she felt *so* alone! Such moments of natural cheerfulness and beauty, are soothing to all griefs but those of love. The heart is softened by them to love, and the one—that one so dear, is more missed, longed for, with more cruel yearnings, at such sweet hours than at any other.

The bells kept pealing, pealing—and the sun shining, and the birds chattering and whispering, till her very heart in its loneliness seemed ready to die. And then she lifted up her dark, sorrowful eyes, and wished, if it pleased God, that she might die. But she glanced at her father sleeping there; his beautiful and delicate face, now aged and furrowed by severe suffering, and she retracted the impatient wish.

She had not seen Philip again after parting from him in the unsatisfactory manner she had done, in the garden. One angry, reproachful note he had written; begun in anger, at least, but ending in lamentations and entreaties—conjuring her to let him see her once more.

To this she had replied calmly and firmly, that for them to meet again was impossible. That the only thing now to be done was to forget each other as they could, and that she believed that if they would honestly give themselves up to their respective duties, they would find peace, if not felicity. At least, that

was all she looked to for herself, but she hoped his lot might be happier.

He made one more effort to see her, coming to the little gate, which he found locked, and begging for admission.

When he found her so resolute, he was mortified and angry, and it became more easy, nay, he took a certain pleasure in revenging himself upon her firmness, by affecting insensibility. Besides, Maria really was so pleasing and so much attached to him; and after all, his pride was so much gratified by the position in which he was placed through this eligible match, and his mother so skilfully insinuated these things in his ear, that when Thursday came, he was able to go through the ceremony with much more ease and cheerfulness, than he could have thought possible. For his feelings were excitable rather than deep—and then it is, alas! so easy to stifle our better feelings.

Maria had been anxious to run down to the old house to visit her friend, so soon as she

knew of her arrival, which was not until three days after it had taken place; for both Philip and Mrs. Gorhambury were anxious to keep it from her as long as possible. Upon the second or third day, however, she had learned it, and though declaring herself so full of business, that she had not a moment to spare, she said she must go and have a chat with Hernana.

She had all a young girl's natural impatience to talk over, and discuss her happiness; tell of her little troubles and anxieties, and of all her joys and sacrifices; even from a sweet walk with him, to the incomparable box of flowers just arrived from Paris, and the beautiful trinkets Philip Gorhambury had given her.

Mrs. Gorhambury had not much sympathy to bestow upon the sorrows of others; yet Hernana's conduct had so delighted her—her firmness had given her such a blessed relief, and she had behaved altogether, as she said to herself, so well—that she should be anxious to spare her every particle of unnecessary suffering.



Besides, she was not without anxiety that if the two girls met, something of the fatal secret might transpire. So she managed to put off, and to delay the intended visit; now upon pretence that Mr. Lovel must not be disturbed; now for one reason or another; so as there were in fact but very few days to get through, and a world of things to be done, the visit was exchanged for a note; and a very affectionate one it was from Maria to Hernana, that drew forth an equally affectionate reply, and so the matter ended.

It was, indeed, the greatest relief to Hernana to be spared this visit; a thing she dreaded beyond measure. Not only for the excessive pain the presence of Maria might give her, but because she feared that something might escape her, under the agitation of her feelings, that would give Maria some slight hint of the truth, and thus poison her happiness; for the least intimation is sufficient to awaken suspicion, and the whole truth is certain, sooner or later, to be found out.

As regarded Philip Gorhambury's gifts, you will, perhaps, think, after the manner in which he had behaved, that she conducted herself with very little delicacy. I dare say that if it had been your case, you would have scorned to accept them after what had passed, and would have returned, as far as it was possible, every one of them. She did no such thing. She would not wound him so.

After all, she could not help pitying, while she blamed him, pitying his weakness, compassionating over his faults; his punishment she feared would be greater than he was himself aware of; she would give him no unnecessary pain; she quietly allowed everything to remain as it was. Nay, she was able to take a melancholy, and not ungenerous pleasure in these proofs of his kindness.

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Time rolled on; and quietly with his kind and soothing touches effaced the memory of

the past. She found it more easy to recover her peace of mind, than she had found it to preserve her tranquillity under the alternations of suspense. The marriage with another in such cases has the effect of death. The severance is more terrible, the first wretchedness more cruel ; but the alleviating effect of time is certain.

Her days were occupied by objects which interested her heart, and called her abilities into full exercise. In the first place, there was her father. He had been allowed to return to his curacy, without which, indeed, he would have been no longer able to subsist ; but under a sort of tacit understanding, that such part of his duties as the state of his health rendered it impossible to fulfil, his daughter should perform for him. He was quite equal to go through his strictly clerical duties. He could reach his church, could preach, read prayers, marry, baptize, and bury ; but that assiduous visiting and guardianship of the poor, in which he had been so exemplary, and under which his

health had broken down, was now almost entirely out of the question. This part of his task, however, he knew that Hernana was eminently calculated to fulfil, and she became, under his directions, a sort of little curate; under his guidance, a Scripture reader, school inspector, or what you will, thus strove to supply her father's inability, and to wrestle with the misery and disorder of the wretched population around them.

Then there was Lady Aylmer. On their return home, they had parted at the Isle of Wight, some faint tidings had reached the bereaved mother, whose mind was still as much occupied by her loss as it had been during the first cruel year. Time seemed to have no healing effect in this instance. Her regrets were as vivid, her harassing anxieties only increased as years advanced, for her persuasion that the child lived never varied. It seemed to cling to her mind with an almost preternatural pertinacity.

Lady Aylmer had heard of some gangs

of vagrants, half smugglers, half gipsies, infesting the southern parts of Kent and Sussex; and she had determined, before returning home, to visit those districts, and endeavour to gain some intelligence of the habits and customs of these tribes of wanderers, among some one of which she doubted not that her son, if he existed, would be found. She had spent a couple of months in the most toilsome and tedious researches, but the gangs of gipsies that had haunted the neighbourhood the year before, were now gone elsewhere, and had so completely cleared away from that part of the country, that there was not a vestige of them left.

The habits of these people are so little known, and they excite so little attention, that it is not surprising that nothing could be discovered.

The only fresh information that she received was from the gaoler at the prison of Lewes. She had learned, among a few other trifling facts, connected with these wanderers, that a

gipsy lad, named Big Ben, had been committed to Lewes gaol about eighteen months before, and had been tried, and from thence been transported.

Her blood ran cold at the intelligence. Was it possible? Might not this be her lost, unhappy boy. Something seemed to interest her more than she could account to herself for, in this gipsy's fate. She went to Lewes, visited the gaol, and requested to see the gaoler.

She was shewn into the neat parlour occupied by the gaoler's wife, most nicely furnished with brightly burnished grate, pictures upon the walls, and geraniums in the windows, everything bespeaking peace and good order.

The gaoler's wife was naturally kind and sympathizing, and seeing this pale and delicate lady, with her tall, slender figure, and a face so singularly expressive of habitual suffering, she seemed to think nothing she could do, too much, to express her pity. Her manner was so gentle and feeling, that it touched Lady Aylmer's heart, and led her to converse more openly with

this young woman than was her usual custom ; for she was in general silent and reserved, and little inclined to anything that might approach to gossiping conversation with her inferiors. But now she began to talk about the prison and its inmates, and so, step by step, was led to the subject nearest her heart ; and to ask whether gipsies were often committed to prison ; and whether she knew anything of their habits, their places of abode, or the divisions of their tribes ?

“Very little,” the young woman said, “the downs and deep vallies near the south-coast were a good deal infested by them ; but they did not often perpetrate any notorious offences, and in their little deceits and pilferings, were so wary, that they were very seldom detected. It was rarely, indeed, that anything approaching to a felony was committed by them, though there were strange tales of secret and cruel murders, sometimes done in revenge, though she, for her part, did not much believe them. The gipsies were mostly a tricking set,

taking advantage of silly people, and very shrewd and clever themselves.

“Was there not a gipsy youth between seventeen and eighteen years of age, committed to this prison for housebreaking, about eighteen months ago,” asked Lady Aylmer with a trembling voice.

“I really don’t remember, Ma’am.”

“He was called Big Ben, I think they told me.”

“Oh, yes ! now I recollect ; Big Ben ! Yes, I remember my husband talking a good deal about that at the time ; but I think, if I recollect, it rather justified what I have been saying about these gipsies. It was thought rather a singular circumstance to have one committed for housebreaking ; but he had been engaged in smuggling, I believe, and so got acquainted with a regular gang of London thieves, and was by them drawn into a participation in this affair. My husband pitied the poor gipsy lad a good deal, and his sentence was commuted to—Oh, here comes Mr. Arnott to speak for himself.”



And Mr. Arnott entered.

He was a strong-built man, with a firm but remarkably mild and benevolent countenance; the habitual exercise of good-will, and the best of charities—care and consideration for those in his power—had impressed themselves upon his countenance.

“This lady,” said his wife, with a sort of gesture of introduction of the two to each other, “has called, I believe, to make some inquiries. Was it about Big Ben, in particular, Madam?” turning to Lady Aylmer.

“Yes,” said Lady Aylmer in a low voice, “I have reasons for wishing to learn every particular connected with that unfortunate youth.”

“He *was* unfortunate,” said Mr. Arnott, “and one of those, and they are not a few among our visitors here, intended by nature for better things, one whom unfortunate circumstances and a vicious training, rather than natural depravity, had led astray. Poor fellow! but he was not altogether deserted neither.”

Lady Aylmer sighed, then endeavouring to gather courage to make her next question, with a voice almost inarticulate from suppressed emotion, she asked :

“ Was the poor youth a gipsy born ? Had he the eyes and the hair of the gipsy race ? I thought you said they seldom—”

“ Yes, he was a genuine gipsy. No doubt of that. His eyes were as black as night, and with the peculiar gipsy expression ; his hair coal-black, and his skin as swarthy as any Egyptian among them all. No doubt of his being a genuine gipsy.”

She breathed more freely. Yet some way she felt dissatisfied. She had almost made up her mind that in this culprit she should find her son—almost reconciled herself to receive him with joy even so—any way so that she found him.

“ Perhaps he might have been so tanned by the sun and air as to have taken this dark colour. I have heard that exposure to the air will do it. That many among the gipsies—” and again her voice faltered, “ are

not of the race. Children stolen sometimes. One has heard of such things."

"Yes, Madam, such things undoubtedly do occur, though not very often, I believe. But it is my opinion that no experience, no rearing even under the same circumstances, ever makes one assume the peculiar characteristics of another, as I could instance from this very case. There was a youth, a friend of the poor lad's, who was most assiduous in coming to visit him, and who belonged, as I ascertained to the same tribe; and yet there was not the slightest resemblance between them. For the other youth had large blue eyes, open countenance, frank and free, and with not the slightest touch of gipsy deceit about him; a fair white skin, which it seemed as if no sun could tan, and fine abundance of golden hair."

Lady Aylmer started up, her hands clasped before her, struggling as if in agony for speech, but speech was denied. All she could utter was a faint ejaculation of "My God!" and she fell back again senseless in her chair.

The good gaoler and his wife, with the most anxious solicitude, applied every means for her recovery, exchanging significant and sympathizing looks with each other the while.

"I shouldn't wonder—I do believe, that this lady must some how have lost a child stolen away by the gipsies," whispered the wife.

"Hush! hush! don't prattle, dear. See she is coming to herself."

She gasped, opened her eyes, clasped the gaoler's hand in both hers, and looked up in his face with the most beseeching and eager expression. He understood her speechless agony, and went on.

"He was a beautiful creature as ever my eyes looked upon; and if ever I saw mortal being upon whom the Almighty had stamped the likeness of an angel—that youth was he."

She uttered a shrill cry of ecstasy, and clasped her hands again wildly together.

"He was the gentlest, bravest, and best of creatures, gipsy bred as he was—such a sense of right and justice, and truth and love—

how he came by it all, He, who created him alone knows. Rarely have I found the like in mortal man. His goodness to that poor foolish, misled Big Ben—passes words. Oh, Madam ! but you are too much affected. What—?”

For she had sank on her knees, and was casting up her arms in a passion of gratitude to heaven. They would have raised her ; but she found words at last.

“ Let me be ! let me be ! Shall I not thank God ? Oh, after all I have suffered ! all I have so dreaded ! to find him thus—thus ! My baby ! my child ! my sweet, innocent little boy ! Oh, blessed and praised be His mercies for ever and ever !”

This paroxysm being over, she rose from her knees, and wiping her eyes, which were streaming with tears of gratitude, begged Mr. Arnott to tell her all he knew about this youth.

“ But first—first of all,” every limb trembling with impatience ; “ tell me ; do you know where he is ?”

“No, Madam, I have not the slightest notion where the tribe have journeyed to, and it is long since they left this part of the country. But take comfort, lady,” said he, affected by her look of blank disappointment; “there can be no difficulty in tracing them. Our police will ferret them out easily, once put upon the scent, and the very circumstance of this remarkable youth being one of them, is sufficient to point them out, and render the following their beat easy.”

“So be of good comfort—be of good comfort, lady,” said the young woman, “if you have lost a child, stolen by them wretched gipsies, and this youth be he, sure, sure now, it’ll not be long before you will find him again.”

“My child had large blue eyes, and hair like silk, of a golden colour; and oh! young as he was, he had that bold free eye of which you spoke—his father, Lord Aylmer had it before him.”

“Lord Aylmer!” said the gaoler. “Are you

the unfortunate Lady Aylmer whose misfortunes were so much the talk of the newspapers, some fourteen years ago, when I was quite a youngster? I remember the story though. I have seen Lord Aylmer once or twice, for I came from that part of the country. Let me recollect! Yes, my lady, I *do* think it is most probable—I hope, I may say, almost certain this youth is your son. Now I think of it, he certainly had a strong likeness to the Aylmer family. My mother was born on the estate, and I remember the last two lords, father and son, well.”

She sat down; she tried to stop the hurried pantings of her heart, to steady her fluttering nerves—to silence the rushing confusion of sounds, like that of many waters, that was in her ears—to be able to think, question and listen.

“Tell me more—tell me all you can recollect.”

“Why, it is not much more that I have to tell, for it being near the assizes and the prison very full, I could not give much at-

tention to this particular case. All I know is, that this extraordinary boy was very kind in coming to assist poor Big Ben, who, though he was a great, full-grown youth, was almost as ignorant and, one might say, innocent as a child ; and would sit and blubber and cry for hours. This young friend of his, would come and talk with him, and exhort him to courage, and patience, and submission to the law ; and most of all, to avoid the bad company of the prison, and keep himself to himself. And he had such a way with him, that he imposed, as it were, upon all those misguided wretches, and there was less drinking and swearing than usual, even in the common wards, whilst he was in the habit of visiting them. Latterly, he brought another man with him, a rather singular-looking being, with hair and beard untrimmed, and his dress shabby and somewhat out of the way ; he had a pale, sickly face, but large black eyes, that looked almost inspired, if one may say so, they were so passionate and earnest. I



could have fancied the prophets of old might have looked thus. This man used to bring his Bible, and read aloud to the prisoners; for the young man, gentleman I may call him, had asked me to give him leave to do this, saying: ‘There is nothing like the Bible, Mr. Arnott; believe me, I have seen a good deal of these sort of poor misled creatures, short as my life has been, and there is nothing for them like the Bible. Let them hear the Word of God; that may have power over their hearts; for the word of man will do little or nothing.’

“I was of his opinion; but was surprised at the way he spoke and thought. And so I gave permission; and he and that other, went in and out of the prison as much as they would. And the Word of God was read to these wretched criminals and outcasts almost daily. Many scoffed, and made game, and turned a deaf ear, at first. Others, like those of Athens to St. Paul, said, ‘We will hear thee again of this matter;’ and sure enough they did; and

others followed their example. In short, the common room became at last an altered place. But after the assizes, when Big Ben was sentenced to transportation, and taken away, I saw no more of them. And really, one thing follows upon another so, that till you came this day, my lady, I had not thought much about it."

Lady Aylmer wrote to Hernana, apparently in great hurry and agitation of mind. She did not enter into particulars, but merely said she thought she had discovered a clue which would lead to the discovery of her long-lost son; that she might have to visit Scotland and Ireland; and should in all probability be absent some time; for she had resolved not to return till her efforts had been crowned with success.

## CHAPTER XI.

AND thus was Hernana left to the solitude of her crushed and disappointed heart—to the performance of her round of monotonous duties, uncheered by happiness in the present, or hope of happiness for the future : as far, at least, as regards what is commonly esteemed happiness in this world.

Many a girl, would have been utterly spirit-broken and miserable under the gloom of such a prospect, even if her health had not altogether given way. Not so Hernana.

I sometimes fear to weary my readers, and to

diminish the effect I wish so earnestly to produce, by for ever and ever, returning to and harping, upon the same intimate persuasion ; but I cannot avoid it. The more I consider human nature and human life, under all its various circumstances and relations, its sorrows and its joys, its evils and its temptations, its duties and its claims, the more intimately one conviction presses upon my mind.

The conviction at which Claribert had arrived—whose only education had been that of the experience of naked facts—of life in its most crude and unsophisticated form, the same conviction has been forced upon me, by reflection, books, and the analysis of my own heart.

Hernana sought for and found that strength which is, in my opinion, the only effectual strength.

She was not alone.

Desolate, and deserted, and forlorn, as her lot might appear to others, she was not any one of these things.

Who can be desolate who believes in the ever-living presence of the Higher power; who deserted—who credits and realises the present existence of a sympathizing Saviour—a friend, an actual friend of poor fallible, faltering, suffering man; who forlorn—who regards life but as the first busy and important act of an interminable chain, and feels that he must be up and doing.

She strove hard to bring her wandering affections under her own power again; to look steadily at what she had lost—not under the delusive colouring of partial affection—but to regard at the past as it really was, and painful as was the confession, she had the courage to own to herself, that Philip deserved to lose her esteem.

She could not look back upon his whole conduct both as regarded Maria and herself, without arriving at the conviction that she had been mistaken in him—in his character was wanting manliness, constancy, and true courage—that he was but a trifler, after all, in spite

of his apparent spirit and energy—a trifle in feelings and in morals.

Gradually, her esteem and value for him declined, and with them her affection—all of it, at least, that was too imaginative and passionate—died away; a tender anxiety for his real welfare, and for the happiness of the pretty Maria, was all that remained.

Caritas—that expressive word, of which no translation into our language can give the full force—which cannot be rendered by charity, nor even by love—that large, expansive, glowing, generous feeling, took possession of her heart, and devoted her to love and seek their happiness, and the happiness of all mankind.

It had become necessary, as I have explained, that she should undertake, in the present state of her father's health, a large share of that part of his duty which consisted in visiting and looking after the poor. This, in her present situation, was peculiarly fortunate. It forced upon her a vast deal of wholesome employ-

ment, and so much active business, that she had not much leisure left for melancholy thoughts, even had she not resolutely forbade herself the indulgence.

There was abundant scope for her goodness and activity. The town of G——, and more especially that portion of it, which lay in the parish with which she had to do, was in a dreadfully neglected state. The town was a very ancient one, and a large portion of its streets, alleys, and courts were still much as they had been centuries ago. Houses crowded upon each other; the apartments, low, dark, and close; the streets and alleys narrow and filthy; the courts, if possible, more gloomy and unwholesome still. A wretched and neglected population inhabited these places, who had been left almost entirely to themselves until Mr. Lovel took the curacy; and during his absence were rapidly relapsing into their former state of vice and misery.

Much of Hernana's time was spent among these wretched dwellings; but the mass of

disorder and corruption was enormous—more than the strength of one man had been able to cope with—and certainly not to be overcome by one woman, be her energies ever so great. It was a veritable Augean stable!

Often, after having exhausted herself with fruitless endeavours to amend what was wrong, she would return home disheartened and almost utterly dispirited. But still she persevered. She considered that every little done, however little it might be, was something; and that it was hers to labour in the vocation to which she was called, and for One Higher to bless the work.

So she toiled on.

Her only change of thought was from the letters she now and then received from Lady Aylmer, who did not write often, and her letters when they came, were full of disappointment and despondency.

Sometimes it happens so in life. Everything in which we take interest or concern, seems to be going wrong together.



Lady Aylmer was sometimes in London, sometimes travelling from place to place; but she could obtain no tidings of the singular person whom she was persuaded, would prove to be her son.

The clue seemed to be lost. No such person was to be heard of, among any of the principal gangs of gipsies that could be traced out. Sometimes these people migrated abroad, she was told. She began to fear that the tribe with which her son travelled must have left the country; for no person answering to that description was to be found in the gangs generally known to the police.

So months rolled away, and at last, time in its course brought Philip Gorhambury, and his young and pretty wife home from their continental tour.

They were to occupy a charming place, about three miles from G——, situated in a most lovely part of the romantic country which surrounds the city. Their house was furnished with everything that luxury or

elegance could devise, to render an abode delightful; fine, beautiful flower gardens and pleasure grounds surrounded it—falling waters, pleasant shady groves, gay parterres, enchanting prospects—for they were surrounded with splendid scenery.

There was a piano-forte chosen by Mrs. Gorhambury herself, of the finest tone imaginable, and Philip's violoncello ready in its case.

Why do I weary myself with enumerating the means of enjoyment which surrounded those, who had no appetite to enjoy. It is, I believe, impossible for life to present a more tasteless aspect than that in which there is nothing left to be wished for—or rather, perhaps it would be a more faithful expression to say—everything left to be wished for. All the outer gifts of existence lavished around with the utmost profusion, and the man, the soul of man himself, bare and unfruitful as the sand of the desert.

He had travelled before, so that means of excitement had considerably lost its power.

With an interesting companion indeed, all the first, fresh pleasure which scenes of beauty and historic interest present, would have been enhanced to the highest degree; but as it was, he felt that to be two, was only to have a weight attached to him, which infringed upon his liberty of action, without adding to his enjoyment.

He set out resolved not to be pleased, and inclined to regard everything the poor young girl said or did, with an evil, jaundiced eye.

She was a mere school-girl—scarcely, one may say, educated at all—loaded with superficial accomplishments, but almost entirely without ideas. Ignorant to a degree, and wholly to seek upon every topic that adorns or enlarges the mind, she could not be a companion for a clever man in the usual sense of the word; but she might have become an object of tender interest to a loving and benevolent one.

She had a most amiable disposition, a lively fancy, and a very loving, affectionate heart, with great simplicity of character in spite of

her artificial education. She had considerable natural taste, and could have taken the most lively pleasure in the various objects which their travels presented, had not her enjoyments been damped by all his coldness and unkindness.

Her abilities, such as they were, and they were far from despicable, were utterly depressed by the mortifying contempt with which he got into the way of treating her.

She was not, unfortunately, one precisely calculated to interest and please a man of his taste and character; but many men, far superior to Philip Gorhambury, indulgent and candid, have managed to find a vast deal of happiness in the devoted affection of women far inferior to what Maria Westmore might have been. But he would not even try to love her or to understand her, to spare her or to consider her. Philip Gorhambury thought only of himself, that he was a victim, thrown away in a most unsuitable lot, and disappointed and wretched; he pitied himself extremely, and he deserved pity—so far, at least, as it

is due to those who have brought their unhappiness upon themselves by their own conduct; and in this egotistical self-compassion, he suffered himself to be so absorbed, that he was totally insensible to the claims and sufferings of others. Insensible, rather that he never thought of them, than that he was incapable of feeling for them if he had.

He indulged himself in positive dislike of his hapless young wife; blaming her as the cause of his misery, because she had loved, and could not please him. He did not even thank her for her love; he hated every proof she ventured to give of it. It was this fond and foolish partiality of hers, he said to himself, that had beguiled him to his ruin.

And so poor, unhappy, disappointed girl, she thus painfully travelled through France and Italy and Germany, with the man of her heart, the man her poor childish, inexperienced heart had fixed its school-girl fancy upon, and whom she had fallen in love with, deeply in love, as silly girls do. Yet, silly girl or not, ther

was a real love mixed up with much romance and foolishness. The poor little thing had a heart, and a worthy and kind husband might have made what he would of it.

She had so longed to travel, and had thought with such rapturous pleasure of doing so with Philip. To travel by the side of him she loves is perhaps the highest earthly felicity which a woman can picture to herself. And this was the reality !

How stale, flat, and uninteresting everything appeared, as she sat in the carriage, gazing upon the beautiful scenes they passed through, whilst her companion muffled up in his travelling cloak, and sunk back in the opposite corner, engaged with his own bitter regrets, pretended to be asleep. If she ventured to make an observation, he would start up as if disagreeably disturbed, open his eyes, look out, and with some sarcastic remark upon her want of taste or her childish facility in being pleased, sink back and resume his dose again. Did they visit galleries of pictures,

palaces or churches, he left her to the guide, to seek her own explanations, strolling on by her side, or usually a little in advance of her, lost, as it appeared, in his own sublime contemplations, in which she was not privileged to share.

Oh ! what a world of miseries, small in detail, infinite in amount, may be compressed into the circle of one little wedding-ring.

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In the solitude of the heart to which she had been condemned, poor Maria had looked round upon every side for consolation, but knew not in what quarter to find it. Her mother, she knew, was quite incapable of entering into any distresses of this nature. So long as her husband did not beat her, and that she had plenty of money to spend, Lady Maria would never believe that there was any reason for complaint. With her father she had always



lived upon those terms of reserve and distance, which renders confidence of the heart impossible. Mrs. Gorhambury was too formidable a person to be complained to, and Mr. Gorhambury would have been a mere cypher in everybody's eyes, only that he was more disliked than cyphers usually are, or can be. There was one, whom she used to like very much, quite to love in former days, but they had seen so little of each other lately. Yet something drew the heart of the poor young wife to her former friend, and the second day after their return to England, and the establishment of our young couple at Durham Lodge, Maria ordered her carriage, and the coachman was directed to drive to the old Parsonage.

The pretty elegantly dressed creature, stepped out when the carriage stopped at the little iron gate, and telling the footman to let the coachman drive up and down a little, whilst he waited for her outside, lifted the latch herself, and entered the garden—the garden, which by the care of Philip, had been some few months



ago so well arranged ; but which now, through want of time, and want of means, on the part of its present possessor, had pretty much resumed its air of uncomfortable disorder.

Maria looked round, and felt her spirits only sinking the faster for the desolation of the scene. There are times when small things of this kind have a most infectious power. There was an air of unhappiness, a want of cheerfulness about the old place, which she had never observed before ; for, in truth, everything had been sadly neglected of late. Not, however, because Hernana was unhappy—though we cannot say that she was very *happy*—so much, as that she was too much wearied and worn out with exertions in the cause of others, to have any strength to bestow upon matters of mere self-gratification. And she had less money to spare than ever, as the claims for assistance from the poor around her became more pressing, as her personal acquaintance with misery was more extended. She was sitting in the

parlour alone, engaged in needle-work, when the door opened and Maria, who had let herself in, appeared. Hernana started up, and could scarcely contain her surprise.

“Returned,” she cried, “and here so soon. But what is the matter, my dear Mrs. Gorham-bury? Have you been ill? I am sorry to see you look so thin and changed.”

“Do I look thin and changed?” was the answer. “But why do you call me Mrs. Gorham-bury? Don’t do that. Don’t be formal with me, Hernana, for I am come to you to seek a friend,” and her lips began to quiver a little, “not a mere acquaintance. We used to be friends, and I hope you will be my friend still: I want a friend very much.”

“Dear Maria! what pleasure it gives me to hear you speak in that affectionate manner. You have not forgotten our old friendship? This is a great pleasure to me. But sit down, will you not? How beautiful you look, Maria,” she added, as she placed her upon the comfortable sofa—Philip’s gift. “Travelling has

improved your beauty more than your health ; for you are very thin and very pale.”

“Thank you, for saying that, Hernana. Everybody says I am so changed, that I was afraid I was grown ugly. You know that is what people usually mean when they say one is changed ; and do you know ? I care a vast deal more for my good looks than ever I did before I was married. Not that it much signifies either.” And she sighed.

Hernana was not so indiscreet a friend as to desire the confidence of a married life. She knew such troubles were usually best kept within the narrow boundary of the two most intimately concerned ; and “*qu’entre l’écorce et le bois, l’on ne met pas le doigt ;*” but Maria, who had not much discretion, and less reserve, was not inclined to have it so at all. She was come to seek a confidant, and she went on.

“I look thin and pale, you say. Ah, Hernana ! how little did I think when just six months ago I started from this place with Philip Gorhambury, esteeming myself the very happiest

creature upon the face of the earth, that I should in that little, little time, come back the most miserable.”

“ My dear Maria !”

“ Yes,” and the tears began to gather into her eyes, “ the most miserable, for I am married to a man it is utterly impossible to please. I could almost think he hates me, Hernana.”

“ My dear girl ! don’t talk in this way—pray don’t speak in this manner—it cannot be right.”

“ He once was great friends with you. He seemed to like you. Tell me, dear Hernana, how you managed to please him ; teach me how to please him. He is excessively unkind—oh ! you cannot imagine how unkind ! and yet I cannot help loving him. I try all I can to dislike him, as I am sure he dislikes me ; to hate him for the contempt and almost aversion he shows for me ; but I cannot do it—I cannot do it.”

“ And never, never try to do it, dear girl,”

said Hernana, now coming and sitting down by her upon the sofa; her interest greatly awakened by this short and artless speech. "Never try to learn not to love him. That will never be the way to make him love you."

"I don't know. He seems so to dislike me—absolutely to dislike me for loving him—so that I sometimes think if I could bring myself to hate him, he might care for me more."

"No, my dear, that would not do; love him, love him faithfully, or, dear Maria—but let us see whether we cannot hit upon some better method of showing your affection, than, perhaps, you have been practising."

She reflected a little, then, she said :

"Maria, you must not let Philip Gorham-bury be a castaway, and if you were to teach yourself not to care for him, *that* he would infallibly become. No, no," she repeated half to herself, "that must not be—that must not be."

"I have no power to prevent him casting

himself away," said the poor little wife, sorrowfully; "for he has no value for my affection, and he seems quite sick of my society. He used to like my playing rather, and to accompany me upon his violoncello, you know; but that is all over now. One gets so tired of fiddling all day long—and what else is there to do? He used to be dreadfully *ennuyé* at Rome and at Florence. You can't think how dull and good-for-nothing he would look; and then he would stalk out to the Casinos, or some such places, where, I suppose he played, for there was a great deal of gambling going on, I believe; and I have heard him say once or twice that he was sick of everything upon earth, and the only thing that stirred his blood was the rattle of the dice."

"Is it come to this already?" mentally ejaculated Hernana. "Oh, Philip!"

And then she sighed as she remembered how she had heard a very clever man say, that the finer the faculties the more fatal was it not to exercise them; that it was only those who had

dormant powers unapplied, that knew to the full extent what was really meant by the word *ennui*. And she groaned in spirit at the thought of the sacrifice that had been offered at the shrine of worldly pride and prudence.

But, now, what is to be done?

My tale draws to a close, and I have not half done with it. I intended to have described to you more in detail what took place, from the date of this opening confidence, between these two young women: the generous efforts of Hernana to ensure her rival's happiness, and her lover's happiness with her rival; the wisdom and tenderness of her counsels; and the docility with which the poor disappointed young creature endeavoured to follow them; but all in vain.

There was that fatal element surrounding them which rendered all attempts to recal Philip to a better state of feeling impossible, and this element was unbounded prosperity—health and wealth, funds and consideration, the power to gratify every wish as soon as it

arose ; and not one single care, not one single indispensable duty to perform, every day was a day of as unmixed felicity as the days of Seged the Happy, and was, as were those of Seged, utterly and hopelessly miserable.

Vicious, Philip had not as yet become ; but Hernana trembled lest vice should not be long in coming. Vice, in the majority, is most often the refuge from that dreaded, that terrible *ennui*, which appears to be the only form of human suffering which it is impossible for human nature to endure : a refuge from that *must* be found, at any cost it would seem.



## CHAPTER XII.

WE leave the wretched victim, partly of his own faults, partly of circumstances, partly of the faults of others; and his poor little wife, who is vainly trying, under Hernana's guidance, to make an interest for herself in his heart. It was vain, indeed!

The heart could not be awakened. It was fallen into the dead sleep of unchecked self-indulgence.

Hernana did what she could, but all her efforts seemed fruitless to stem this tide of evil. She was forced in mere self-defence to turn

away her eyes, and *refresh* herself with the aspect of real want, of actual privation—sickness, poverty, and sorrow.

These things were wholesome. These were spirit-stirring. They roused, and melted, and mended the heart, and there was comfort to be given, and comfort to be found in giving it. You could help and solace *these* sufferers. They could receive solace amid their real natural wants and privations. You could do much for them.

So to them she turned again, and with a heavy heart—a heart rendered heavy by the prospect of increasing evil, neither to be arrested nor mitigated, in the home of luxury and idleness—she went where there was grief and want, and heavy labour to be endured.

Sorrow and anxiety enough, however, there was to meet her there. For was there not sin and vice, and selfishness and violence, and wrong, and ill-temper and unkindness there too?

But it is more easy to preach the Gospel to

the poor than to the rich ; but then, alas ! do what she would, how little could she perform ; her time, her strength, her powers, how unequal to contend with the mass of ignorance and evil which surrounded her ! She was thinking mournfully enough of these things one day ; as she had set out to make a longer walk than usual. It was to a distant suburb, which lay at the very further end of this large parish, and which she had not the means of conveyance requisite to enable her to visit often ; for the walk to it was very long, and took up more time and strength than she had to spare, from still more urgent duties.

She had, however, been blaming herself for this species of involuntary neglect ; and as she walked on, was reflecting sorrowfully upon the impossibility, with her limited means, to suffice to the grievous wants around her—wants occasioned, if not increased, by the negligent indifference of those who ought to have taken the

charge upon themselves. But those were the days of pluralities and non-residences ; and the gentleman to whom Mr. Gorhambury had resigned his living, was either, through the pretence, or real necessity, I care not which, of attention to his health, at present abroad.

I have called the place to which she was bound, a suburb. It was rather an outlying village, inhabited by a community chiefly employed in rope-making ; their rope-walks lying between them and the city. The place stood upon a bare piece of common land, almost quite uncultivated, and covered with heath furze, and stunted bushes of holly and whitethorn. This piece of unoccupied land was, in all probability, what had tempted these rope-makers to settle in the place. They were a community living to themselves, as is sometimes found in trades of this description, earning but scanty wages, which their wives and daughter attempted to eke out by the then miserable trade of button-making.

They were a poor, and they were an immoral and lawless community, for they lived at least three miles from their parish church, to which they rarely, if ever went; and the little modest meeting-house, which, in some degree repairs the want of spiritual teaching to these sort of communities, was not there to be seen; even the Methodists appeared by some accident or other to have overlooked them.

Hernana visited several cottages, all nearly equally squalid, filthy, and miserable; at last, she came to one, that stood a little apart, and was of a somewhat more decent appearance than the rest. Its aspect was picturesque; for its low, deep roof of heavy thatch, on which stone-crop, and tufts of heathery grass, and even wild flowers were growing, was gilded by the rays of the setting sun, which glittered upon the small, deep-set windows, and shed its long beams over an expanse of the sandy heath land; now purpling with the ling, and adorned with the golden blossoms of the furze.

Mountains, ridge behind ridge, rose in the distance, forming a wild and beautiful scene, which the front of the cottage looked full upon. The door of the house was standing open ; and upon one side of it, upon a sort of rude bench, there sat a person, who seemed to be a way-faring man, something above the lower degree ; his face somewhat raised, looking, as it were with a sort of rapt ecstasy over the beautiful scene, and towards the rich crimson, gold and purple clouds that surrounded the setting sun. From the cottage, the low sounds of one reading might be heard.

Hernana paused a moment, unwilling to disturb the man seated upon the bench ; and as she stood still in the unbroken silence around, the voice of the reader came up clear, distinct, most tender and most musical ; but it was a young man's voice—say rather the voice of an angel.

At last the reading ceased, and then Hernana advanced towards the cottage door.

As she did so, the man seated upon the bench stood up, and saluted her respectfully.

He was a strange, singular-looking man, though his dress was that of an ordinary person. He had on a coat of plain black, rather rusty, and the worse for wear; but his face was so thin and haggard, his eyes so excited, his hair and beard so untrimmed and shaggy, that he appeared very unlike other people. There was in his singularity, however, something rather interesting than alarming, wild as his appearance was.

She returned his salute, but hesitated before entering the cottage.

“Go in without fear,” he said. “It is the Lord’s work which is going on in that place.”

Thus encouraged, she stepped to the door and crossed the threshold silently, unwilling to disturb what was going on, for the reading had been resumed again. The room into which she entered was large, but low; one of those

projecting screens, common in old houses, protected the fireplace from the draught of the door. It was dimly lighted by two small casement windows opposite to each other, but almost buried in the overhanging roofs. A large sort of wooden couch, made of dark oak, was upon one side of the recess by the fireplace, in which an excellent fire was blazing. A handsome dresser and shelves, likewise of oak, and adorned with a goodly row of blue and white china plates and dishes, stood against the wall, and the room was well filled with chairs and tables of various descriptions, every one of which was at present occupied.

The occupants were working men, in their ordinary dresses, and intermingled with women, who seemed just to have put on clean caps to render their appearance a little decent. This audience was seated not only upon chairs, but upon the tables, dresser, some even upon the floor, where a few children were scrambling about, though without making any noise, for the least disturbance was immediately reproved



by a long, low hush-sh-sh ! which ran through the apartment.

The men were of rude appearance, their countenances were almost approaching to the brutal, but this character at present redeemed by the air of serious, fixed attention with which all eyes were rivetted upon the reader, seeming to devour his every word. The women looked demurely heedful ; and altogether, the assembly, in spite of the sordidness of their appearance was rendered interesting by the air of rapt attention which pervaded it.

A decent woman of advanced age, dressed in a blue bedgown and black petticoat, with her grey hair drawn up under a mob-cap, white as snow, sat upon a chair by the fire ; her spinning-wheel beside her ; the wheel of which, however, was still, for she, like the rest, was listening intently.

Upon the oaken couch, the pale, wasted figure of a young woman whom Hernana had come to visit, now evidently in the last stage of a decline, lay extended. Her dress was scrupulously clean and neat ; and the pillow under

her head and the quilted coverlid laid over, white as the snow. Her face, which had once been remarkably handsome, was now lean and wasted, and coloured by a hectic flush. She lay there, her bright glittering eyes bent upon the reader, and her thin hands clasped fervently together.

In the centre of this group, which formed a sort of irregular semi-circle, a little advanced before the rest, seated upon a chair a thought more considerable than the others in size and appearance, was the reader, his clear and most harmonious voice sounding through the apartment.

He was a very young man, apparently not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, above the middle height, and a form and face of the most extraordinary beauty — that beauty possessing a charm indescribable by words; a loveliness, the result of the perfection of external feature, glorified by an air of purity, simplicity, gentleness, and noble strength united.

Profoundly serious, nay, melancholy in its

gravity, was that most lovely countenance—bearing an aspect of almost divine pity and sorrow; yet was the brow so open, so calm, so serene, that the pity, and the sorrow, and the melancholy seemed that of a being belonging not to this vain and troubled world.

His complexion was fair, his cheek slightly tinted with colour, which rose and heightened as he read, his eyes blue, his abundant hair light and golden.

His eyes were fixed upon his book, from which he lifted them at times to impress the meaning of what he read upon his hearers; but he was not aware of the entrance of Hernana, he seemed too intent upon his object to be alive to other things.

He was reading the ninth chapter of St. John, the recovery of sight to the man who was born blind.

The reader stopped. The affecting history had ended; but the silence of attention still continued. Nobody moved or uttered a syllable: their very breath seemed hushed. Presently—

“ And now shall we not sing a hymn to the Lord who hath done these great things for us.”

Upon which the man who had been sitting upon the bench outside, entered the cottage, and making a respectful salute to Hernana as he passed her, came forward and lifted up that deep sonorous voice of his, which we first heard among the Sussex vallies, with: “ The Lord my Shepherd is.”

And the most part of those present joined him. A concert of rude voices; but it was the expression of the heart.

The poor young creature upon the wooden couch, who was, indeed, dying of a decline, joined not, but her eyes were lifted up towards heaven, filled with that ecstasy which seems only given to those nearly approaching the solemn confines of meeting worlds, when the veil of the flesh will be withdrawn. The aged mother sat by her with hands clasped and a few tears—tears, they were, of hope and comfort—stealing down her cheeks. The men

opened wide their mouths, pouring forth their deep voices, with which the shrill notes of the women not unpleasingly mingled.

The young man did not sing, but he stood up and looked around him with an expression of love and joy, saddened, yet heavenly.

When the psalm was finished, they all sat down again; and then the young reader, taking up another book which lay upon the dresser behind him, said:

“ After we had read the Word of God, and done our poor duty to Him as best we might, by singing forth His holy praise, I thought, my friends, you would, perhaps, like that I should go on with the reading we began a little while ago, but I am afraid it is getting too late.”

“ Oh no, Master! no, Master!” echoed the voices round; “ one stave, be it ever so short a one, before you go away. I couldn’t get asleep, I’m sure, the last time for a thinking what that poor fellow would do, cast upon such a wild coast like; and his poor wife and young ones!

Pray, Master, let us have a little more of it."

Such entreaties sounded round the room; the women and men both equally in earnest.

"Well then, here goes," said the young man, evidently much pleased, and cheerfully resuming his place again; "but the sun is setting fast, and, mind, we part at sunset. To-morrow is Sabbath Day. We must have plenty of time to clean and rub up ourselves and our homes to honour the Lord's Day—the great and good Saviour's resurrection day."

"Ay, ay; all right, all right; but please lose no time."

Upon which, in a cheerful, easy tone, he began to read the "Swiss Family Robinson," taking it up at the place where he had left off the Saturday night before.

The pleasure, the interest, the gleaming of intelligence and benevolence visible in the countenances of the delighted listeners, it was, indeed, satisfaction to look upon.

What pleasure greater than to watch those

germs of moral and spiritual beauty, which lie dormant in every man, swelling like the buds at the breath of spring, and bursting up into life.

These poor, low, degenerated, brutalized natures awakened to enjoyments so purifying, so elevating ! Probably they knew not why or wherefore ; but was it not a blessed sight ? Are not these blessed, blessed things ?

He read charmingly, varying his tones with true dramatic talent ; content to exercise that talent, which might have brought down thunders of applause from an admiring theatre, before this humble audience ; recompensed, thrice recompensed, so they were the happier and the better for it.

At last the sun dropped below the horizon, and the reader closed the book. But the audience sat still, as if fascinated with what they had heard, hanging upon his words, reluctant to finish. But he turned to them, and with a face now beaming with satisfaction said :

“All pleasures must come to an end ; and we must leave these good folk to sup upon their cray-fish without our company. I am afraid they will find the beast rather tough ; and I wish you all may have a better supper, and so good-night. If good Mrs. Beecher will give us leave, and if Mary there does not find it too much for her, we will meet here again on Thursday night. And now, good friends—dear friends—hear me, though I am but a child ; and what am I to exhort grown men ? You’ll go to church or chapel, all of you, won’t you, to-morrow ? You’ll will not, like the brutes that perish, pass the day dedicated to the Lord who made you, and by His express command to be kept holy ? You will not, like poor dumb beasts, pass it without honouring Him ?”

“No, no, Master,” responded one man, with a grim smile, seeming to take upon himself the office of spokesman for the whole group : “such of us as has clothes fit enough will go there, be sure ; and pray for those who haven’t.”



“ You would all of you have clothes good enough, if it were not for the gin-shop, Will Sparkes,” put in the leader of the psalmody. “ Well, let those go who have, and those who haven’t, save their money till they have.”

And now the men took their tattered hats and caps, and the women curtsying to Hernana as they passed, the little assembly dispersed. The elder man resumed his place outside the door, the younger one approached the couch, and said, in the kindest tones :

“ I am afraid you are very bad to-night—in great pain. This has been too much for you.”

“ I am in much pain,” said Mary, endeavouring vainly to suppress a groan ; “ but the reading does me good. Now I have been taught all these blessed things, the more I hear of them the happier and stronger I am ; and then, that other book is so pretty, when I lay awake at night it is so nice to think of all those wonderful beautiful things. But, oh,

this pain!—this pain!” she almost cried out, writhing under a new spasm.

“Oh, that I could do something for that, too! But what can I do? You want help that I cannot give you.”

“The young lady, Miss Lovel, promised to come some day or other to see us,” the elder woman said. “She knows a good deal, but—”

“And here she is,” said Hernana, coming forward.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE evening was closing fast, as the two left the cottage.

In her anxiety to relieve the poor suffering girl, and the interest she had taken in the scene which just preceded, the time had slipped away. Hernana was used to go about alone, and almost at any hour ; but there was a considerable walk, and a very lonely one, lying between her and home.

The sun had long sunk ; and the western horizon which presented itself as the two came out, was faintly ruddy with the departing

light. Star after star was coming forth, spangling the clear, unclouded heavens ; planets and suns, in their glorious splendour, beaming upon that wide-spreading heath ! The distant mountains, dimly visible, were sleeping in the soft, mysterious light. All was still, except a murmur of indistinct voices, heard from the cottages at a little distance ; where, from time to time, a door might be heard shutting to, and a light be seen gleaming from a casement window.

She paused, as she crossed the threshold of the cottage, and lifted up her eyes in admiration of the wondrous beauty of the scene before her. The next feeling, as she observed how she had let the time slip by, and how late it was, became one of disagreeable perplexity.

She stood hesitating what to do. The elder man had joined them, as she and the youth left the cottage together ; and now, with much respect in his voice, said :

“ The evening is closing fast. Has this young lady far to go ? This is a lonely and a rude place. Perhaps the young lady would

give us leave to walk behind her, on her way, till we see her safe at home."

To this (for there really was no other alternative) she consented, and the three proceeded together; the young man lingering by her side, whilst the elder one, musing in silence, as was his usual custom, followed them.

She had been much struck with everything she had seen about the young stranger, and was not sorry to have an opportunity of conversing with him; for his manners were so gentle, and there was such an air of natural refinement about him—differing in this respect so widely from his companion—that her curiosity was greatly excited.

And so they talked; for he, on his side, appeared entirely free from anything approaching to conventional reserve, though there was not the least that was obtrusive about him.

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"That it is; I have seen so much of them"

—this is the way they were talking—“I have lived with them—loved them, and felt for them. For their sakes, what would I not do? I know how rude, and brutal, and unintelligible, they must appear to people placed at a distance from them. So barbarous! so rough! so disgusting! so almost savage! I do not wonder *they* find it difficult to sympathise with *us*; but *I* know them, and I know there is the heart of flesh beating beneath the dirty, tattered garment, and concealed by ungainly aspect and coarse, hard voice; and more, that there is intellect and wit, and mental power, undeveloped, behind those wild, barbarian features. That is what has made me pity them so intensely—those poor children of one common Father! And yet, perhaps, I am mistaken. If there were more refinement, would they be happier?—But, at least, if they could be made less vicious, they would be happier.”

“And is it long that you have pursued this plan of visiting and reading to them?”

“Not more than about eighteen months.

It was a little before that time the dayspring came to me ; I became a new creature ; I felt that it was what I wanted, all that I had been so long dimly groping and agonizing for ; and then I resolved to devote my life to carrying that light to my darkened fellow-creatures, which had been like a new birth to me. I am so full of sorrow for them, and I feel so sure that there is but one way to reach them, and that is through Him who said : ‘ I have the words of everlasting life.’ ”

“ But who are you, who think and speak so rightly ? Surely your origin is not from among these poor degraded creatures, whom you are so desirous to help. Your very features and voice are different from anything I ever met with among those classes, and I have seen a good deal of them.”

“ Do you think so ? Many have thought so. It is the usual remark I hear from strangers. The very brothers of my tribe, indeed, though they love me, look upon me as not one of theirs. I know not whence I am,

but I have confused pictures—which, indistinct as they are, never fade away—of another life and other scenes in my earliest childhood. They used to try to persuade me that I came from fairy-land. The delusion is past, but the pictures remain the same.”

The heart of Hernana now began to beat fast.

“And from what part of England do you come?” she said. “And can you tell where these scenes of childhood, which you remember in this confused manner, took place?”

“How should I? I have been a wanderer and a vagabond upon the face of the earth ever since I can distinctly remember, and yet I never recollect the time when I did not feel persuaded that I was born for other things than to travel about among gipsy boys.”

“And you cannot recollect anything connected with the place of your birth, with the circumstances of your infancy?”

“It seems to me that I dream of lofty rooms, all shining with mirrors and gilding,



and of a sweet woman's face bending down to kiss me as I sit upon her knee."

"Should you know that woman's face again, if you saw it?"

"Yes, I should; but I shall never see it. Time must have changed it, if death have spared it. Time has changed me."

"Too true," she said, and she sighed. And then she turned and looked steadfastly at that beautiful face, and fancied she could trace faint lines of resemblance. But they were faint; he was most like his father, whom she had never seen.

They were now approaching the paved streets. Hernana stopped; she had, with her usual promptness, laid out a plan, and resolved upon its immediate execution.

"I have something to propose to you," she said. "My father was speaking but the other day of endeavouring to engage a Scripture reader, to make up in some degree for his own sad and forced inefficiency. Either you or your friend, perhaps, might not dislike the office. You,

I should be very glad to present to him; I think you are just what he is in search of."

"My call is not to one place or another place," he said. "I am a wanderer, bred if not born. My call is to walk among my poor lost brothers, here and there, and in no fixed place; wherever I can hope to do good, there I must be. I thank you for thinking of me."

"But it is not necessary," she answered, "that you should be absolutely tied to a place. Only promise me to think of it, and in the meantime, perhaps, you will come up and see my father; it would be well you should meet. He might, at all events, put you in the way to enlarge your sphere of usefulness in this place; and then, he is such a man, you would feel privileged to be brought into communication with him, so pious, so good, so truly benevolent and Christian a pastor; alas! poor man."

"I shall be happy, most happy, to be pre-

sented to him, if he is as you say. The good are very many. I am to your class a mere homeless outcast. My brothers are not there ; but, thank you, I will come."

There was a strange sort of formality in his way of speaking. It had all the simplicity, however, if not the ease, of the higher classes ; and this gentle gravity at his age was singular as it was winning.

It was arranged that he should call upon Mr. Lovel the next morning.

The two men accompanied her to the little iron gate. She bade them good night, and let herself in.

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It was the next day, in the evening, that Hernana saw Charlie again.

She had expected him all the morning, but he had not made his appearance. About five o'clock in the afternoon the little gate opened, and with much agitation in his countenance, he was seen coming up the garden-walk.

He knocked at the house door. Hernana came herself to open it. She had been waiting for him the whole day with the greatest anxiety and impatience, reading Lady Aylmer's letters over and over again; and as she read her descriptions, she became the more and more convinced that this young man and the missing one were the same.

"You are come," she said, "rather late, but my father will be glad to see you."

"I am indeed very late, but I have been in much distress since I left your door last night. The one dearest to me upon earth, who has been to me more, if possible, than a mother, now lies to all appearance dying. She is in a strange state, both of body and mind, and there is no one to help her. I think she wants a woman's help — a lady's help — who could minister to both body and mind, which are both in sore travail. Will you come? Forgive my boldness; but I thought I saw that about you last night which encourages those in distress to call upon you. Will you come?"

These words were poured forth with a simple beseeching earnestness. It seemed as if the pleader was still so new to life, as to trust in perfect faith to his own favourable impressions ; and to believe that to the good, it was only necessary to utter the cry for assistance to find relief.

Hernana was perhaps a little overmuch of the same confiding temper. In this instance, however, her impressions did not deceive her.

She looked at the young man's pleading face, the pure and simple, not to say noble, character of its expression. She remembered how she had seen him employed the night before, and it was impossible for her to refuse his prayer.

"Yes, I will go with you readily, if I can be of any use ; but tell me how it goes with the poor woman. Perhaps I may be able to take something with me that will relieve her."

"I fear there is little to be done. For years she has been slowly wasting away, under the torment of some oppressive secret—I fear, the secret of some grievous wrong committed—nay,

I sometimes fear, crime. Her cheek has grown thinner and thinner, and the crimson spot upon it more bright and fiery; her eyes more anxious and more haggard, day by day. Still, she has followed me and my friend about, upon all our various pilgrimages, in spite of all we could say to persuade her to be at rest. Of late, she has been more than usually earnest with us to travel in this direction; but as we approached the part of the country, she became more and more restless and agitated. Last night she was suddenly taken much worse. She is at times, I think, almost delirious. She raves of some lady that she ought to see. I find it difficult to know what to do for her. This morning, it struck me that you, perhaps, would be so kind as to visit her, and try to soothe her, as you did the poor suffering creature last night."

"I will come and do what I can, willingly—what I can. Step in for a moment, whilst I put on my things; I will be as quick as possible."

He entered the little sitting-room, which was empty, and stood there, waiting till she was ready. She soon joined him, in her walking bonnet and cloak; which bonnet, simple as it was, set off to advantage the face beneath it, now beaming with kindness. A finer young creature can scarcely be seen, than she at that moment looked.

The young man fixed his eyes upon her in a sort of wondering admiration. It was, perhaps, the first time in his life that the power of female charm had been presented to him. He looked, turned away his head, and sighed; and then, without speaking, led the way to the door.

As they walked rapidly onwards together, and she resumed the conversation of the evening before with her usual animation, he answered less easily; his words seemed to come from him with difficulty, as if thinking of something else; and once or twice he sighed.

At last they approached the lowly mansion, in which he and his companion, with the

wretched Hesther, had taken up their lodging. It was a small dwelling, upon the outskirts of the town, standing alone, and looking out upon another side of the same heath I have described before. The appearance of the place was decent, though very humble: the two missionaries being careful to choose themselves respectable lodgings wherever they rested.

“I am glad you are come back,” said a nice-looking old woman who opened the door, “for she is mortal bad, and at times seems as if she was losing speech altogether. Then she rallies again, starts up in her bed, and calls for you—and says you must come, or it will be too late. Oh! I am glad you have been and brought Miss Lovel. But how came you to think of Miss Lovel? Bless you, Ma’am, if any one can do the poor soul good, it is you.”

“Will you come this way,” said Charlie, “up these stairs?”

And he led the way up the narrow winding stairs which led to the door of Hesther’s room. It was an old door of thin planks, ill-



fitting both above and below, and through it the sounds of deep and heavy groanings might be heard.

“It is not the body so much as the spirit that is striving with the mortal agony,” said Charlie. “Oh! speak some words of woman’s peace to the broken heart of woman.”

He opened the door gently. Upon a low truckle bed Hesther was lying; her dress little different from that which she wore in the day, but she was half-covered with the coarse sheet and counterpane. Her long black hair had fallen round her shoulders, and lay in heavy dark masses, slightly silvered with grey. Her face—as half-raised in her bed there she sat, her thin, veiny hands tightly clenched, and resting upon her knee, and her dark black eyes staring forward—with its thin, sharp features, was working with agony.

Every now and then she wrung her hands, between anguish and impatience; at other times they would sink powerless before her, and she would utter a low and piteous groan.

“ Charlie! Charlie!” she almost screamed as the door opened, “ is it you? Oh, where have you been?—where have you been? I thought you would never come again! I thought before the terrible dark hour of death, an hour darker and more terrible had come—the hour that would take you away from me!”

“ Did you think I ever would forsake you, mammy?” said he, with a smile of the kindest affection; “ *that* was a foolish trouble; for you know it is what I never, never will do.”

“ Never! never!—ah! but you do not know. The hour *will* come, it is come!” with a wild and piteous cry, “ the hour when you will curse and abhor poor Hesther.”

“ Never—never—never.”

“ Oh! you do not know. But who is that? Who is that fair creature, with the Romany blood mantling in her brown cheek. I know well who she is; her name is Lovel, a friend of the poor and helpless she is; but why do you bring her to me?”

“ Because,” said Hernana, coming up to the

bedside, "he thought I might be able to comfort you."

Hesther shook her head.

"No one can comfort me, there is no one can comfort Hesther. There is that lying upon Hesther's heart, which hand on earth cannot remove."

"But, mammy, mother, it is never too late. There is another hand, a mightier, and more merciful, than any earthly hand. He can do it!"

"I have told you," she said, with a darkening look, "that it was of no use talking to me in this way. That, which you see, I cannot see; that which you feel, I cannot feel. Where to you there is light, to me it is all darkness; where you find comfort, I find nought but misery, misery, misery, misery."

"Speak to her—speak to her, lady," cried Charlie, in bitter distress at these words. "Speak to her; you are wise, and instructed, and eloquent. I am a poor, ignorant boy—speak to her; oh! find some comfort for

her soul. For the love of God, speak to her !”

“The God you cannot see,” said the young girl, in a tender, feeling voice, laying her hand upon the clenched hands of the woman. “The God you cannot see, is not the less real, the less near, because you cannot perceive Him. *His* eye is upon you, though you see it not. His tender mercies encircle you, though you know it not.”

“Ah ! ah ! Is it so ? But how am I to be assured of it ? No, no, no—and if He does live—if His eye be upon me, will that comfort me, think you, when I know the black and hideous heart that lies within this breast ? He reads the heart, does He not ? at least, so all these preachers say.”

“Yes ; most sure, He reads the heart.”

“Then, what have you to do ? To persuade me to take comfort ? He hates crime, murder and robbery, deceit and wrong. Murder the worst ! of the aged and helpless. Robbery the worst ! of a woman’s own child. Deceit ! the

long deceit of sixteen years ; and wrong ! and angel wronged."

" Yes," said Hernana, " most sure, the God of righteousness abhors crime, and those you speak of are fearful crimes. If you have committed such, it is indeed an awful thing ; yet it is never too late. There is remission and pardon for the darkest criminal if—"

" If what?" fixing her eyes earnestly upon her face.

" If he repent, truly repent, and make restitution and reparation, such as lies in his power, before it is too late."

" Ay ! ay ! ay ! I knew it would be so. Your God only comes to me to tear my heart in two—to force my treasure, my life's treasure from me ! Yes, yes ; He is merciful and good. You say so. And He will take thee *from* me !" she cried passionately, looking at Charlie, and stretching her arms convulsively towards him.

Hernana paused — gazed — conviction was strengthening within.

“Yes,” she said with authority; “He *will*, for He *is* good and merciful, and it is time that the *real* mother’s tears should be dried, and the wronged one restored to his own.”

Hesther answered by a wildering shriek.

“Who are you? who are you?” she cried. “Then you know! you know! But—” and all the wily acuteness of the gipsy came into her eyes as she said it, “But if you know, what is the use of my telling you, I wonder?”

“Because, to do right at last is what you must do, whether I know or not; because to confess the truth is the only way to find peace for your soul, and the time is short, for you are about to die.”

“Ah! if I were but sure of that! But this it is, lady!” griping her hand between her burning fingers, and looking earnestly up into Hernana’s eyes; “this it is: I *cannot* part with him before I die! Do you think this is the first time? Oh, no! How I have wrestled with myself; how I have been torn and divided when I looked at him! Look at

him now, as there he stands, with those heaven-blue eyes fixed upon me! My darling! my angel!"—as, with a countenance full of feeling and affection, he knelt down by the side of the pallet, and pressed his face against the mattress upon which she lay. "My darling! my angel!" and she fondly laid her skinny hand upon his beautiful hair. "How could I wrong thee? Yet how could I part with thee? Thou oughtest to have been a lord in thy grand castle among the mountains! But what would have become of Hesther? There is no place in grand castles for Hesther!"

"It is, then, as I thought!" cried Hernana, vehemently. "Oh! Lady Aylmer!"

"Aylmer!" cried Hesther, suddenly turning to her. "Aylmer! Who told you it was Aylmer?"

"It is! it is, then!" almost sobbed Hernana. "Oh! my friend! Oh! Lady Aylmer!"

The young man rose up from the bedside.

"What is all this about? What is the meaning of all this?"

Hernana could not speak. She held out her hand to him.

“What is this? what is it all?” he kept ejaculating.

“The lost is found! The lost is found at last!” burst forth from Hernana. “You are the long-lost Claribert, Lord Aylmer!”

“Perhaps,” he said, gravely drawing forth from her bosom the little sack in which the glove was enclosed, and tearing it open—“perhaps this may throw some light!”

“The very glove!” she shrieked rather than said. “You are—you are the long-lost child! Oh! my friend! my dear Lady Aylmer!”

Hesther all this time kept gazing upon her, as if almost stupified. At last she slowly sank back upon her pillow, like one utterly exhausted.

“Yes!” she said; “take him away! take the young lord away! for he it is! he it is! He is the lost child of the Dana Ford!”

“She is dying! she is dying!” cried Hernana, whose presence of mind rarely for-



sook her. "We must have her deposition! Send for a magistrate! send for a magistrate!" She ran to the top of the stairs; she screamed to the woman of the house; she called for a magistrate; then for pen, ink, and paper.

"I will take it down myself!" she said; "and you shall listen to it, and swear to it!"

An old scrap of dirty paper, written upon with a pen and ink borrowed a few doors off, received the dying confession of Hesther. One or two decent people in the neighbourhood were hastily summoned in, to listen to and swear to it.

Whilst Hernana was thus busily employed, hurrying forward the preparation of this document so precious, how was he, the most interested in this scene, occupied? With what feelings did he receive the astounding discovery that he, the outcast, beggar, and gipsy, was a noble in this noble land—he, the poor, needy wanderer, lord of a sumptuous castle and mighty possessions?

He was upon the opposite side of the bed,

his arm tenderly supporting the pillow of the dying woman, with one hand so gently wiping the death-dew from her brow, and stooping down, from time to time, to kiss that haggard face as he hung over it.

Her closing eyes opened, she looked up at that face so dear, so true, still so full of affection, and then the agonized and desperate gaze softened.

“He does not go away. You love your poor mammy, do you? Still, still—thank your God then, for He *is* merciful, and He has healed my heart at last!”

She then, as far as her strength would permit, in broken accents, and with her eyes fixed upon that face so passionately loved, made a full confession of the events of the fatal night, and of the murder at the ford; and pointing to a small bundle which she always carried with her, said it contained the clothes which the child at that time wore. These, united with the glove she had hung round his neck, seemed to complete the chain of evidence. After she had

made her confession, the gipsy-woman seemed relieved and somewhat better.

“You will get better yet, mammy,” said Charlie cheerfully.

“And live to see you righted? No, no! Do you see,” as a white pigeon fluttered up to the window, “that is the messenger to fetch my soul away. Kiss me, Charlie, kiss poor Hesther, Lord Aylmer. Oh! it is merciful to let me die, before his real mother has him!”

These were her last words.

Bedewed with the abundant tears of him she had so wronged and loved, without making confession of another crime which weighed lightly upon her conscience in comparison with the wrong done to Charlie, her spirit quietly passed away, and went to that world, where justice tempered by mercy, allots the portion of each, according to their lights and their opportunities.

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He rose from the side of the pallet over which he had wept and watched, and reverently closed her eyes.

Then he looked up, and around him, but he was already an altered man.

He was himself.

That strange contradiction he had always felt within, between his instincts and the circumstances which surrounded him, and that had made his life appear like some wizard dream, from which he was ever upon the point of awakening, had ended. He had awakened, and he was at once restored and at one with himself.

Strange, but true—the impressions of early infancy, the strong sympathies of blood, the something impressed upon the individual man as his birthright—not all the habits and influences of sixteen years could efface. They had always by the intuitive sense been received as something alien and strange; but now he felt restored to his native element.

He looked upon Hernana with a momentary

hesitation, which he speedily conquered, and going up to her, took her hand, and thanked her most warmly for what she had done.

Not the slightest doubt seems to have perplexed him as to his really being the lost heir of Castle Avon, nor the least apprehension as to the capability of proving that the truth, of which he felt as much convinced as if it had been revealed to him.

With the utmost simplicity he assumed the position to which he was born—a simplicity, be it said, which never forsook him. Such as he was at that moment, such he remained. The shepherd-lord celebrated by Wordsworth, was a being akin to him. Then he said :

“ And my mother? my real mother? Alas ! poor mother, I remember her. I think I could almost know her again, and the room where I sat upon her knee, and her smile. Alas ! poor mother. That memory always haunted me, and I loved it still better than you, my poor mammy.”

“ She lives. She had got upon your trace,

and is now searching you over the United Kingdom. Poor, bereaved mother ! to have you restored at last !”

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Expresses were dispatched on many sides, and before long the mother was restored to her son.

To doubt of his identity when thus discovered was impossible. His likeness to his father, the late Lord Aylmer, was so striking, that it must have been remarked by the most casual observer.

The little glove ; the clothes marked with his own initials in tiny letters, and easily to be recognised ; his own recollections — the chain of evidence was perfect, and the mother and son were clasped in each other's arms in full security.

They seemed, indeed, to recollect each other. He had still a look of what he had been as a child, and she yet bore traces of that face which

had bent over and kissed him as he sat upon her lap — that face which had haunted his waking dreams for so many years.

Last of all in the chain of evidence, came the extraordinary revelation of the deceit practised by Mr. Gorhambury and his agent, of which the unhappy stranger had been the instrument.

As it was necessary to obtain every tittle of evidence before the formal claim of restitution of Lord Aylmer's rights could be made, this most painful circumstance could not be concealed.

My tale draws to a close. I need not dwell upon the law proceedings which ensued; enough, Mr. Gorhambury was cast, and the young Lord Aylmer, after his restoration, becoming, as being under age, and the will destroyed, a ward of Chancery, no indulgence could be shown as respected the accumulation of rents received and spent during the fourteen years of wrongful possession; more especially when the means were made public, by which that possession had been obtained.

Mr. Gorhambury, it is needless to say, was completely ruined. How his proud, hard, and bitter spirit endured this sudden reverse of fortune, may be understood by those who have observed how little real fortitude is shown by the ungentle, under the sharp visitations of life ; how little real strength there is in what is only *hard* ; how little real courage in what is rough ; how little real patience in what is unfeeling. He was, however, proud in the midst of his sufferings, and obstinately refused the assistance Lord Aylmer was impatient to offer him.

He did not live long to need it. One secret, yet undivulged, was rankling still at his heart ; one other heinous action, and which might—he trembled at the idea—be discovered too. This secret, probably, it was which continued to prey upon his spirits, even after he had a little rallied from the effects of his terrible overthrow.

I know not, and I little care. He did not live to suffer long. Suffering would not have



amended him. He became more morose, unamiable and unfeeling than ever. It was impossible to sympathise with—almost to pity him.

One day he was found dead in his bed. No inquiries were made; and if he added another to his catalogue of erring deeds, it—like the one recovering the will—escaped discovery in this world. He was carried to his grave unregretted. Nay, the world seemed all the better and lighter because he was taken out of it.

At his death Mrs. Gorhambury came into possession of a small income from her settlement. She, like her husband, refusing the assistance most liberally offered.

And how did Philip take it? The spoiled child of fortune! was he the better for the reverse? And how did that poor little trifler, he was so unkind to, bear this sudden fall from affluence the most unbounded, to narrow circumstances?

She bore it like a woman with a heart—like

a woman, a dear true woman, who cares for nothing in this world, so that it does not touch her affections. She showed herself in the hour of adversity in her true colours, and of her true value. She was courageous, cheerful, affectionate, and loving, to everybody ; most of all to him she loved so dearly, in spite of all his unhappiness. And he ?

Yes, he had not a bad heart ; he was only a spoiled, pampered child of luxury, and vanity, and pride. He suffered dreadfully, not so much from the loss of position and fortune—though to that far from indifferent—as from the distressing and mortifying discoveries that were made public.

He could not bear to show his face in society after what had happened. He resolved to expatriate himself, and got a place in one of the colonies. And there she cheerfully followed him.

She was so loving, so cheering, so good-humoured, so happy, in being only allowed to devote herself to him. True woman ! Heart of man could not resist it.

He had a heart, and he had good abilities, all running to ruin; but this check saved him.

Philip Gorhambury became a valuable man, and poor little Maria as happy as woman could be. He made a fortune in the colony where he settled, and had, as I have heard, twelve children.

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And Claribert, Lord Aylmer, how did he support the more difficult transition which he was called to?

Like that Clifford, named the Shepherd Lord :

“Who, long compelled in humble walks to go,  
Was softened into feeling, soothed and tamed.

“Love he had found in huts where poor men lie ;  
His daily teachers had been woods and rills ;  
The silence that is in the starry sky,  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

“Nor did he change, but kept, in lofty place,  
The wisdom which adversity had bred.

“Glad were the vales and every cottage hearth ;  
The Shepherd Lord was honoured more and more ;  
And ages after he was laid in earth,  
‘ The good Lord Clifford ’ was the name he bore.”

And so it was with the Gipsy Lord.

There are some characters, to use a quaint old illustration, which, like the bee, suck honey from every flower ; to which every event of life, brings its accession of wisdom, or kind feeling ; who know how to profit by each experience, and to increase the treasure of indulgence and pity by all the errors and unhappiness they see around them.

I may, perhaps, be thought to deal with romances, but I assure my readers that real life has furnished examples, rare, I allow, of the most extraordinary excellence and beauty of character developed under circumstances quite as unfavourable as those of Claribert, Lord Aylmer.

He was not, however, a monster of perfec-

tions. He did not come out with all the polish and elegance of manner which he would probably have acquired under the early tutelage of the great world ; but the perfect simplicity of his character, the noble freedom from pride or vanity, and their degrading shape of false shame, the dignity of his aims, and the generous benevolence of his heart, were sufficient to mark him as one singular only in excellence and virtue.

Still he never learned to love the great world. His heart clung with a fond solicitude to those among whom he had been reared. Their good their improvement, was the object of his life. He knew no interest to be compared to that of endeavouring to spread light in their deep darkness, and to purify their foul, foul stream of life.

To lift these beings—created little lower than the angels, yet sunk to grovel below the brutes—to their high inheritance, by opening to them that one grand prospect of the infinite and eternal life for which they were born, and

bringing them into communion with that Being who forsook the realms of everlasting day, and made Himself a home of darksome clay, to preach the Gospel to the poor ; seating Himself at table with publicans and sinners ; and calling not the righteous but sinners to repentance. This was his great aim, and this he did in a spirit in which I wish it always were done—of warm, glowing love. His teachings were like those of the beautiful creation around Him ; fresh as the blithe air, warm and genial as the sunbeam, beautiful as the glorious star-constellations, and tender as the budding flower.

He knew how to call to life, all that was imaginative, loving, engaging, in the humane heart. He loved to see these poor creatures happier, as well as better, and whilst he strove to withdraw them from the criminal excitements of their miserable lives, to substitute what would be full of a truer enjoyment.

Thus his life was passed away, in what was a singular and original course of his own. At

his time it was thought *most* singular. Thank God, it would not be so esteemed now.

Hernana was at least three, perhaps four years older than he was, but that did not prevent the growth of an attachment to which a peculiar sympathy in their characters and ways of thinking gave birth. In due time they married and were *very* happy.

They ventured upon an experiment, which, to many people, I am sorry to say, would have been a dangerous one—they took their parents to dwell with them, under the same roof.

It is, indeed, a disgrace to human nature, that this cannot more often, with prudence, be done.

Lady Aylmer, still young, and restored, as it were, to a fresh existence by the presence of her son, shared in his interests and occupations, and was rewarded for her long years of sorrow by his strong and partial attachment; an attachment of which his young wife was never jealous.

Mr. Lovel retired with them to Castle Avon, where he assumed the post of chaplain. and found abundance of employment for all the little bodily strength which illness had left him.

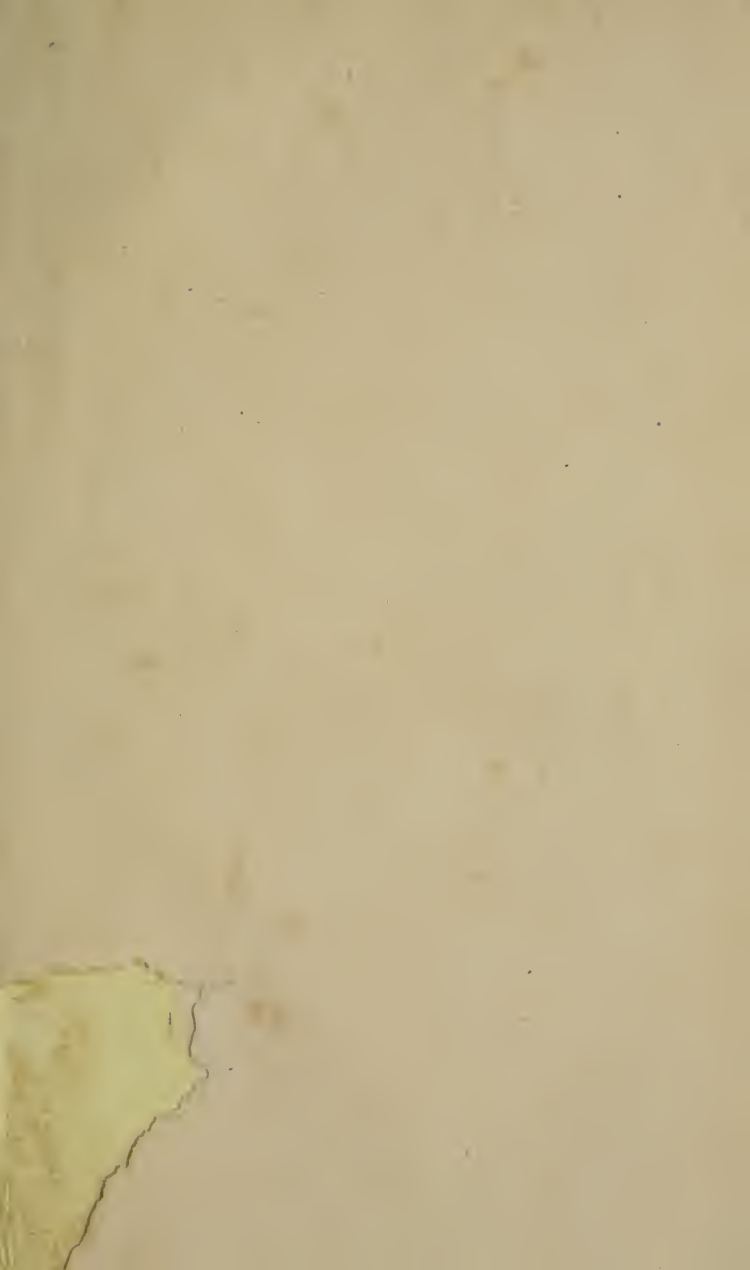
And so farewell to them and you.

THE END.

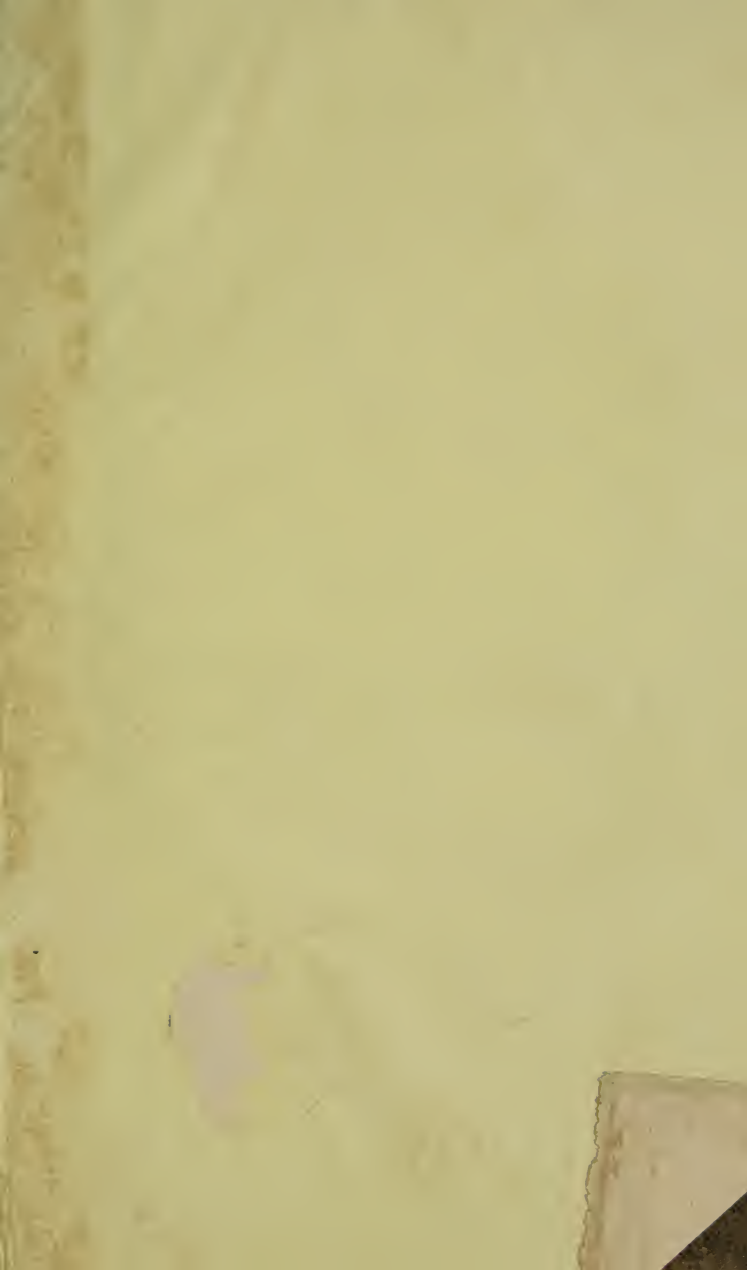
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